

Author's note

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The greatest thanks must go to the young adults, previously the subjects of this project, who so trustingly and warmly shared their life stories with us, and to their remaining foster parents, who welcomed us into their homes.

The author has written this account with attention to detail, believing that this has been necessary to fully express the complexity of involvement in the lives of children with such fundamental losses, while also acknowledging that one has only scratched the surface. Project lives and lived lives are obviously very different things. However, one hopes that this follow-up account of community-based fostering has, as one says nowadays, “unpacked” some of the challenges and dilemmas which underlie our often rather glib use of the term “community-based solutions”.

Although from a child development and rights point of view, the author is firmly on the side of settling children in communities rather than placement in institutional settings, this experience has shown me the depth of the commitment necessary to fulfil this task in the best interests of the child.

Elizabeth Jareg
Oslo 2005

Please note that for the sake of anonymity and protection the names of all the children, foster mothers/father and the village in which they stay, as well as nearby landmarks have been changed.

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Background information

Members of the Save the Children Alliance working for years in countries afflicted by armed conflict, high HIV prevalence and famine, have been involved as part of programmes to assist children in armed conflict, in both tracing and re-unification activities, and in setting up community-based care arrangements for children for whom no parents or extended family members could be found. The Save the Children Alliance Co-ordinating group on children in armed conflict and disasters had been concerned for some time that the organisation lacked documentation on the longer-term outcomes for fostered children, as well a more in-depth knowledge on which factors promoted good care for children, and which ones predicted poor care and possible breakdown of relationships.

Thus in 2001 members of the Save the Children Alliance from Sweden, United Kingdom and Norway formed a task group “Care and Protection of Separated Children in Emergencies” (CPSCE) and embarked on a two-year project of research and documentation on the Save the Children Alliance experience with care arrangements for children separated from parental care during emergencies. Save the Children Sweden led this group, and were the main source of funds..

Of central importance to this effort was the focus on hearing directly from children themselves. Most of the studies and cases come from war-afflicted countries, but a study was also commissioned from Malawi on foster care of children affected by the Aids pandemic. The study in this report arises from the context of famine and war, and is Save the Children Norway’s contribution.

David Tolfree, an international expert in the area of separated children and their care, was hired by the Task Group to co-ordinate and at times carry out the research, and finally to compile the research findings in his book “Whose children? Separated Children’s Protection and participation in emergencies,” published in 2004. It is highly recommended that those who wish to obtain a broader view of the issue of care arrangements for separated children read this compelling book.

1. Loss and separation: the context and background of the community-based foster homes

1.1. The Ethiopian famine 1984-86

This account of efforts to re-build a life for children who had lost their homes and families is set in the context of the devastating famine in Ethiopia during the years 1984-86/87. It is estimated that one million people perished as a result of this tragedy.

For political reasons, the reality of widespread hunger was denied by the ruling regime at that time. However, the renowned film made by the late Ahmed Amin for the BBC in 1985 revealing the unfolding human tragedy from the relief camps in Wollo, northern Ethiopia, shocked the world into action. The international humanitarian community poured into Ethiopia with food, vehicles, medicines and all the accompanying trappings of a large scale emergency response. Too late for thousands, the collective action nevertheless saved further thousands from certain death by starvation. Critical analyses of the emergency response have since been made by several organisations and individuals. This report will only focus on one aspect of the consequences of famine: the children who are left behind.

Much of the international media focus at that time was on the northern part of Ethiopia, particularly Wollo and Gonder. However, other parts of the country were also badly hit by the particularly lethal combination of drought, ongoing war with Eritrea, and political ideology which forcibly moved large sections of the population from less to more fertile, but overpopulated areas, ("villagisation"), thus putting fragile agricultural economies and social systems under great strain.

Driving through the captivatingly beautiful mountainous countryside of southern Ethiopia in 1985, the lush green vegetation contrasting strikingly with the bright yellow of the "*Meskal*" flower, it was difficult to grasp the grim underlying reality of widespread hunger also in this area. It was called the "green hunger".

Save the Children Norway in Ethiopia (SCNiE), then known as Redd Barna-Ethiopia, began relief work in January 1985 Wolaita Awraja, (county), opening feeding camps especially focusing on therapeutic feeding of severely undernourished children. This report will continue to use the term Redd Barna Ethiopia (RB-E) to be true to the original context.

During the same year, RB-E was approached by the Ethiopian government body co-ordinating the relief operations, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, (RRC), and asked to assist in re-settling **240 children in an area south - west of Wolaita, Dora Ghibe Peasants Association in Limu Seka Awraja**. In this area, the province of Illubabor, where much of the remaining tropical forest in Ethiopia is found, the effects on subsistence farming of the persisting drought had been made even more severe by the ever-present tsetse fly, infecting cattle with trypanosomiasis, "sleeping sickness," and the re-settlement of thousands of people moved forcibly from the Northern provinces.

There were at that time few international organisations involved in relief efforts in the area. The RRC and Lutheran World Federation through its local partner, Mekanie Yesus of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, were dealing with food distribution. During the period from 1984 onwards, two shelters, one in Dora Ghibe, with 166 children and the other in Gale, with 74 children, were established to cope with the increasing numbers of children

who, in various ways connected with the famine, became separated from their families. The children were eventually moved into one shelter in Dora Ghibe. These were the children we would come to know and work with during the next 5 years.

2. Bringing the children home: the initial stages of the project of reunification and reintegration of the separated children in Limu Seka

2.1. The beginnings

On the signing of an agreement between RB-E and RRC in December 1986, the project, known as "*The unaccompanied children's project, Lima Seka, Ilubabor*" began in January 1987. The agreement was based on the objective of tracing the children's families and reuniting as many children as possible with surviving family members.

Towards the last week of December, 1986, a reunification team was set up by RB-E. The team comprised six staff: Two social workers, Tesfaye Diressie and Teshome Mengiste, who had extensive experience in tracing and reunification of children, were seconded by RRC head office in Addis Ababa (later on the two of them joined RB-E), two women and one man from the Regional RRC office in Jimma, and a driver from RB-E.

Tesfaye Diressie recalls this period:

Stationed in Limu Genet township, the team carried out basic tasks such as interviewing the children and updating files, starting tracing of parents and other family members, as well as the initial reunification of 11 of the children.

This was a vital step in making the subsequent reunification activities successful. The children realised that reunification was inevitable, while the shelter personnel understood that RB-E was not going in for institutional care as a solution. Families began to understand that sooner or later they were going to get their children back. It was found that many parents had an idea that they could not claim their children, because they thought that they now "belonged" to the government who had been looking after them for a long time. Also, we were told that previous attempts to claim children had been met with rejection from the original government staff in the shelters. There were also families who, due to their poverty and with the memories of the recent famine fresh in their minds, felt that "the government" would be better able to continue caring for their children.

Following several announcements made by the reunification team at churches, market places, and other public gatherings the community began to fully accept and understand the fact that the children belonged to their parents and other family members, and not to the government.

The first formidable task of the reunification team, and which in reality continued until the shelter was closed, was to document the background of each and every child; to try and reconstruct the story of how they came to be in the shelter, and where they originally belonged. This process was naturally very painful, arousing memories among the children of loss, at times perceived abandonment, and many shared how they had constantly hoped that their parents would somehow turn up to collect them. Many children also expressed anger with their parents at being left in the shelter; some appeared to recall nothing; others had been too young to remember their previous lives. A complicating factor was that the children had been told by the organisation previously running the shelter, Mekane

Jesus, of plans to transfer them to an orphanage, which would provide for their every need. This caused initial resistance to reveal the truth of their families, particularly in many of the older children.

There was relatively scanty documentation on the children's backgrounds, and no doubt valuable information had been lost when adults bringing the youngest children to the shelters were not asked for details of their identity and background. There were several routes leading to admission in the two original "shelters." Some children had found their way to the shelters themselves. Others found wandering on the roads alone were assumed by government relief workers to be "orphans" and taken to the shelters, without proper assessment. Many parents took their children to the shelters in the hope that they would survive. Some children came with parents who subsequently died. In addition, 30 children were transferred to the Dora Gibe shelter from a temporary shelter in a nearby township.

The following story, recorded during a follow-up visit in November 1989 was typical of the reason behind children arriving in the shelters, and also illustrates how famine leads to the disintegration of families as parents try to cope with severe food shortage by sending their children to family members, and through other actions.

A. is a widowed mother who has been reunited with her two sons of 11 and 12 years old. She also has a small son of 4 years, but who has the appearance and development of a two-year old, probably the result of early prolonged malnutrition. The family live in a *tukul* which they have borrowed from a better-off neighbouring family. The hut is in poor condition, and there is no surrounding land which they can cultivate, only a tiny plot to grow some vegetables. The only source of income they have is from a small coffee plantation which was owned by her late husband. This year, the yield was only 34kg. The family is dependent on the monthly grain provision by RB-E.

A. looks depressed, and shares with us that she worries about her 13 year old daughter. (This is the first time the staff have heard about this girl). Her daughter has been staying as a domestic servant in the nearby home of a government employee. She does not get any payment, but her food and board, and does not go to school. It now seems that this man is going to be transferred, which means A's daughter will have to return home.

A. explains: "The separation has been necessary in order for my daughter to get food and clothes; but it is better for us to be all together." However, she is worried that her daughter will have difficulty in adapting to a much more materially deprived life, and does not know how she will manage to feed another person.

When asked what happened to the family at the time of the famine, A. reveals a deeply tragic chain of events: "I was pregnant at the time; we had no food at all. Just before my husband died of starvation, he took the two boys to the Dora Ghibe shelter to save them. We found a family who took our daughter in as a domestic servant. When my baby was born after my husband's death, I gave him into the care of my uncle and aunt, as I was unable to feed him myself. I took work as a domestic servant to pay for the keep of my baby and to survive during the famine. I never thought I would ever see my two boys alive again. We lost the house we stayed in after my husband's death, since this belonged to the Coffee Board, where my husband was employed as a coffee farmer on their plantation."

In the consequent reunification programme, it became essential to ask the question "*what happened to your family at the time of the famine*" to understand the underlying issues, the choices parents were forced to make, and the source of continuing grief, guilt and sometimes conflict.

Tesfaye Diressie remembers:

The government employees at the shelter spoke to the reunification team, in front of the children: "Listen! all the children you see here are orphans. Don't expect any child to have any family members" This announcement led the children to say: "I have no relative at all". No wonder that the initial response from the children during the first interview sessions was full of misleading information. When we asked groups of them about their family's whereabouts, they all replied in a chorus: "I am an orphan." The team had to take time to approach the situation tactfully. Instead of interviewing the children with a pen and a paper in our hands we resorted to playing and chatting with them casually. That was how some children started to give us true information about their parents.

Careful documentation eventually revealed however, that out of the original 240 children, only 49 were actually "true" orphans, i.e. lost both their mother and father. Once the message got around in the communities that children were definitely not going to be transferred to an orphanage, some surviving parents, siblings and other relatives started to come to the shelter to claim the children. The verification of these claims also took time.

Tesfaye Diressie reflects:

At times, the documentation process led us astray. Some children whose parents lived nearby in Limu Genet town, told us that they came from a distant place called Mero'chisa or Harojigjila and we had to walk on foot and by horseback for four hours, only to find no one by that name. Some parents, who lived around the Dora Ghibe shelter itself, did not dare declare that they were parents to some of the children. One reason was that there was a rumour circulating that parents who wanted to claim their children would have to first settle the bill for expenses incurred by the child while staying in the shelter.

2.2. The project gets underway

After laying down the foundations of the reunification project within two months time, all team members, but one, returned to RRC. RB-E then engaged two young men who belonged to the area, and who had just completed their 12th. grade examinations, to assist in the documentation and tracing work. They were to become known as "family tracers", and their intimate knowledge of the area was to prove invaluable.

In July the same year, at the request of the RRC, RB-E took over responsibility for the daily running of the Dora Ghibe shelter. Lutheran World Federation (LWF) through their local partner Mekane Yesus, were requested to continue supplying food. At this point there discussions between RB-E and LWF regarding the future arrangements for the children. LWF/MY wished to develop the Dora Ghibe shelter into an orphanage. RB-E argued for the right of the children to family reunification, and this was supported by the RRC. It is important at this point to emphasise that there was no representation of the ministry of social welfare at the level of the municipality or any functioning representation at provincial level at that time who could have been natural partners in this project.

The shelter itself needed urgent attention in terms of organisation, both regarding the psychosocial "climate" and the children's health and hygiene. Recreational activities were started, and every attempt was made to support children to go back to school, or in many cases, to start school for the first time in the local schools.

The following excerpt from a report ¹ during the early stages of the project attempts to capture the scene in the Dora Ghibe shelter:

"The Dora Ghibe shelter is placed on a hilly rise. A high grass fence surrounds an area of about 4 acres. Guards greet you as you enter into a large open compound, the parameters of which are occupied by low grass and wattle buildings in which the children sleep and eat. There is a small office building near the entrance. The children are standing despondently and silently around; they are not playing, and there is none of the laughter one usually associates with children. Many of them are still obviously malnourished, some have scalp infections. Their general appearance suggests poor attention to hygiene".

RB-E supplemented the existing staff with an experienced social worker from mid-1987, specifically to work towards improving the general psychosocial situation of the children and to follow up on their health and nutrition. The atmosphere in the shelter and the general health and nutritional state of the children improved dramatically. Most of the children were encouraged to return to or start school, while awaiting reunification. A follow-up visit ² found the children actively playing and laughing in the compound. Older children were encouraged to help care for the younger children, and also to help with routine tasks in the running of the centre. Much work had been done, continuing until the shelter closed down, to encourage the children to share openly with the social workers their memories and feelings about what they had gone through.

2.3. Uphill work: tracing and re-unification

The tracing and reunification work was to prove extremely challenging. The original families of the children hailed from small villages deep into the surrounding hilly countryside, and spread miles apart. Few of the homes could be reached by road. In the rainy season, paths were turned into slippery rivers, dangerous also for those riding on mules. The dogged dedication of the family tracers and their knowledge of local conditions, as well as the sensitivity with which they approached their difficult task was to prove invaluable. This is how they described their work during these early days:

"We carry out assessments of the family situation before reunification. This is based on many factors, but a main one is the social and economic situation of the family, their willingness to accept their child back, or, in the case of relatives, to care for the child, the willingness of the child to be reunited or placed with relatives, and which relatives they preferred. All this information is entered onto a special chart prepared by the social workers. The family's need for assistance in supporting the child following reunification is assessed regarding short-term support (grain) and long-term support (a one-time cash input of 200 Birr which is most often converted into livestock such as oxen, cows). The family is assessed once more after 6 months."

2.4. Follow-up and the establishment of long-term support in the context of a community development project

In **September 1987**, the first follow-up of children who had been re-united from the shelter began, and continued until March 1988. On the basis of this assessment, RB-E started a project of long-term support over several years to stabilise reunification, as well as community development work in the famine-affected areas which was also aimed at

¹ Consultation report by Elizabeth Jareg, programme adviser, Redd Barna Norway, 1986

² Consultation report by Elizabeth Jareg, Redd Barna Norway, programme adviser, 1987

strengthening the resilience of the population in coping with the effects of the famine as well as preventing new food shortages.

Besides systematic follow-up of the reunited families, community development initiatives based on ongoing consultations with communities and the local authorities included school rehabilitation, upgrading of health facilities, establishment/upgrading of veterinary clinics to enable prevention and treatment of cattle disease, and health and nutrition awareness. Limu Seka Awraja was particularly affected by tuberculosis, and access to good treatment and efficient follow-up of drug regimes was lacking, a fact which continually confronted and challenged RB-E staff working in the programme.

The follow-up project, which continued until 1992, is well documented in various reports, but no final external evaluation has been carried out.

3. The establishment of the Community-Based Foster Homes.

By December 1987, twenty-three children remained in the shelter for whom no relatives could be traced. RB-E proposed to re-settle those children in homes based in the community to avoid them having to be transferred to institutions, which would also have meant removing them far away from their original home areas, and perhaps also have split up the group. This could have reduced the possibility of children and surviving parents becoming re-united in the future.

Five foster mothers were selected, some of whom were women who had been already caring for the children in the shelter, some who were recommended from the Peasant Association of the village where the community-based foster homes were to be established.

A main criterion of selection was that the mother should be a healthy, widowed woman, whose own children were living independently. The latter was to avoid conflict between biological children and foster children. The insistence on that she be a widow came from Ethiopian staff knowledgeable about the culture in the area. They said that men would generally not accept children who were not their own; in the event of children being born to a couple after the foster placement, this would put the foster child at risk. There would also be complications regarding property and inheritance. Another argument was that there were many mothers left alone after the famine, and the fostering arrangement would help both mother and children. Fostering of children was a new concept, although as we see later, adoptions took place in the community. The foster mother was to be a respected member of the community, with a network of friends who would support her at least morally.

Not all mothers belonged to the communities in which they were now living, some came from northern Ethiopia, themselves victims of the “villagisation” policy. The tribal affiliation and community roots of the foster mothers was found to be significant in terms of integration and progress of the individual homes.

The children were matched with the foster mothers according to their religion and when possible, ethnicity. Siblings and friends were kept together in the same family, and attempts were made to construct the groups of children so that their age distribution resembled natural families, and also a reasonable gender balance. The numbers of the children in each home was originally between two to four.

The foster mothers chosen from nearby villages were asked to come and live with "their" group of children for some time prior to the closure of the centre. This allowed for two to three months during which the children and foster mothers got to know one another. The mothers also received training and guidance from the RB-E staff, while awaiting the construction of the *tukuls* which would be the CBFH in the respective villages. All the mothers responded positively to this arrangement. Training was built on and recognised their own competence as mothers, in addition to discussing a range of issues which it was anticipated they would face as foster parents. These included issues of the children's relationship to their dead or missing parents, and responding to children's memories and feelings about their loss; the importance of encouraging children to remember what they could about their original homes; jealousy among the foster siblings; relationships with the community and how to manage discrimination of the foster children.

In January 1988, in agreement with the RCC, the Dora Gibe shelter was closed down. In March the same year, the twenty-three children and their foster mothers were settled in five homes in Woijsa village. Active tracing for surviving family members continued, however, and during the course of 1988, a further 13 children were reunified with their families, resulting in the closure of two of the homes.

The situation at the end of the year was:

Foster mother Fata (Muslim) was caring for 4 boys, Kasa, (12) Indris, Kadir, and Zamedi, (all between 10-12) and two girls, Fatima (6) and Lobaba (5). Indris and Kadir had been transferred from another home which had been closed down.

Foster-mother Mariam (Christian) was caring for Hapte (12) and Tefera (10)

Foster-mother Hawa (Muslim) was caring for Ahmed (12) and Yimam (7).

None of these children were related to each other. Two of them, Ahmed and Kasa, came from Wollo in the north, their families having been part of the "villagisation" scheme.

3.1. Establishing the foster homes in Woijsa village

These three foster-families were established in Woijsa village, in traditional Ethiopian "*tukuls*," solidly-built mud-and-wattle round cottages with thatched roofs, constructed by community members. There were divided spaces inside the huts for sleeping quarters, cooking space and a pen for the cow. The cost of building of these *tukuls*, which were of a standard comparable to the best in the village, was supported by RB-E, while land for building as well as farming land was donated by the Peasants Association (PA). In addition, RB-E provided each home with two ploughing oxen, a cow, farming tools, seeds and other necessary household goods in keeping with standards and traditions in the area.

The rationale for the ploughing oxen was to allow the foster families to participate in what is called the "*kota*" system, an arrangement whereby lending out an ox to a farmer who needed a pair, meant that one was paid in return by receiving half of the harvest. On the other hand, having two oxen allowed one to plough one's own land without having to forfeit harvest. In reality, maintaining the oxen alive and well proved to be challenging in the face of disease.

To begin with the foster mothers received the sum of 30 Birr per month, although they were well aware of the project's objectives: to co-operate with each home towards complete economic viability. Expenses related to education were also covered by the project during the first two years. Initially, funds for a yearly set of clothing were made available, following the custom in the village where children often received new clothing in relation to a particularly important religious festival each year.

The Project Office of the RB-E staff whose responsibility it was to follow up the foster homes as well as the community-based initiatives being implemented in surrounding villages, was about 10 minutes drive away from Woija village.

The staff, entirely Ethiopian, included a psychologist, as well as professional health, agriculture and community-development staff. Follow-up of the homes was done through frequent visits, with conversations with the foster-mothers and children on the wellbeing of the children. As time went by, it was found necessary to also speak with the children alone from time to time, to get their version of how they perceived their lives. All the children were encouraged to attend school.

In 1988, the draft of a contract between RB-E and the foster mothers was drawn up, but we could find no record of these documents during the follow-up, and it is doubtful if they ever were actually signed.

3.2. Working with the foster homes to achieve sustainability

In 1989, a method of following the foster families up using a set of "Sustainability Criteria" was devised (see Annex 1) through discussions between the staff and the adviser (Elizabeth Jareg). The notion of "sustainability" encompassed not only viability in terms of food production and economic status, but also included the *quality of the relationship* between the children and the foster mother, and among the children themselves. In other words, any factor which could cause breakdown of the home, as well as factors which promoted bonding and viability of the family.

The following example of an assessment based on these criteria is taken from a follow-up report from November 1989, when the adviser together with project staff spent some days with the children and the foster mothers carrying out extensive interviews. These assessments were helpful in guiding in a more specific way the further work of the project staff and the foster homes.

1. Family status

Mariam is a young widow, and a foster mother caring for Hapte and Tefera, both about 10-11 years old. She also has a daughter of 12 years staying with her, a situation which was not in line with the original criteria but which was accepted by the staff in view of relationship already developed between Mariam and her two foster sons.. She is now living with her new family in one of the *tukuls* built by the community. The CBH home has been functioning for about one year at the time of this assessment.

2. Family self-sustenance

a) Food production

This year's harvest was good (maize and *teff*), but the total harvest could not be collected because the foster mother was reliant on others to help her plough, which meant she had to forfeit 50% of the harvest. She had also to observe the custom of preparing food and coffee for the workers. If not for those two reasons, the harvest would have been enough for the family's consumption until the next harvest.

However, in order to be totally self-sufficient, also in terms of covering expenses for schooling and clothing, she would need to double the food production. If she had one more ox, this would be possible, because she could also get 50% of a harvest by sharing her oxen.

b) Possession of oxen

The foster mother has two oxen donated by the project, but since she has no children who are old enough to plough, and no male relatives in the community, she still has to pay 50% of her harvest to the person who ploughs her field. Also, the field has to be watched over night and day to prevent wild animals stealing the crops. (Note: due to the proximity to the rainforest, there are large numbers of monkeys, wild boar and other animals which are a constant threat to crops).

c) Other livestock

Mariam has a cow, which recently gave birth to an ox calf. She sold one of the older oxen and bought a new cow. She feels this move increases the family's security and they can get milk. She also has three sheep that gave birth to two lambs which died. She nevertheless feels she has a potential to increase her stock.

d) Income generating

Mariam does not engage at present in any income generating initiatives. During discussions, several possibilities were mentioned by her:

- Vegetable production. There is a large garden surrounding the house, part of which has been planted with chick peas and kale. Both these crops are flourishing, but most of the land is lying unused and weedy
- Honey production, using traditional or improved beehives (honey is a traditional income generating activity in these parts, and at that time fetched a good price).
- Milk products

Mariam is asked how she feels about being in charge of the assets she has, and if she feels she is able to manage them. She replies that it is difficult for her as a single woman to organise their life, but that she feels a responsibility to do so. She feels that it is better to struggle alone than to be dependent on other people.

3. Psychosocial factors

a) Attachment between the foster children and the foster mother

The foster mother expresses a strong attachment between herself and the boys, and says they regard her as a mother figure. They are obedient and helpful with household tasks like fetching water and wood. The children play and tell stories. They let the mother know about their needs, for example books and pencils, and she tries to follow these up

when she can. Sometimes, the children want to sleep close to her, which she allows. When she is sick, they care for her, lighting the fire and saying "We will not eat unless you eat". They are anxious about anything happening to her.

b) Signs of adequate child care

Nutritional status:

Both the children are in a good nutritional state, and in an interview with them alone, confirm that they are getting enough food.

Maintenance of schooling:

Both the children are going to school, but at present the project is covering the school fees.

Health:

Both children are healthy, and it is known that the foster mother actively uses the health post/clinic when necessary. The foster mother has also good health at present.

Help to the children in overcoming their personal losses:

Mariam says that one year ago, the children talked a lot about their biological families "*but now they don't have time to think about their past*". She feels that it is important that the children know about their relatives, however, and does not try to prevent them talking about them.

c) Evidence of serious family conflict

No evidence of serious family conflict, either in the interview with Mariam or the children, is found. The foster mother says that the relationship between her daughter and the children "is like other siblings" and that they are fond of each other.

d) Evidence of child abuse, neglect and discrimination

There is no evidence of physical abuse of the children in this family. However, a child in one of the other CBFH cites an episode where Kadir and Tefera were given a supper of green leaves only and sent to bed, whereupon the foster mother and her daughter had a meal of *injera* (a large pancake made of *teff* and the staple diet in Ethiopia) and *wot* (sauce). They thought the foster children were asleep, but they were just pretending.

Whether this represents only a single event or is part of a general pattern of discrimination, is as yet unclear, and needs to be followed up.

We were not able to interview the children for sufficient time alone, since the foster mother interrupted our talk with them to serve us coffee. Obviously there is a need to talk to the children again approaching them in a way which does not subject them to difficulties.

e) Evidence of severe behavioural/emotional disturbances in the children

The foster mother was worried about one of the boy's behaviour at school. She had received complaints that he was fighting with other pupils. It seems that one of the causes is that the others are provoking him saying " *you are eating pulses!*" -referring to the fact that the family is eating chickpeas (which are unusual to this area) from seeds provided by Redd Barna. It is not certain whether insult is also implied due to the boy's state of orphan-hood, or if there is also jealousy involved. However, it shows how sensitive the foster children are to being seen as "different".

f) Attitudes in the family towards becoming independent of RB-E support

The foster mother is well aware of the fact that the monthly grain support and the monthly financial support paid by RB-E is about to come to an end. In the context of the further discussion she relates:

During the time of the famine I was picked up by a government vehicle and taken to the settlement area near the Dora Ghibe shelter when the "Lutherans" (i.e. Mekanie Yesus) were there. I was asked to help care for the children in the shelter, and got food in return. When the authorities came to give "political instruction" I had to prepare food for them, then somebody else cared for the children, but I passed the night with the children in the shelter. When RB-E came to the shelter I was selected to look after a group of children. I feel that the life I am leading now is better even though I have responsibility. I grow kale and pepper. I do not want to be dependent on relatives. It is good to visit them for a short time, but good to get back home.

Mariam has thought about future marriage, but is anxious that a future husband could also cause problems for the herself and children, and prefers to stay alone rather than take the risk. She points out that if she married and a serious conflict arose between herself and her husband, she has no close relatives to negotiate on her behalf in the traditional way.

She accepts that RB-E will only be able to give support for a certain time, "We have understood this clearly since the beginning. We have been informed that there is two years left, and we know the salary will be stopped at the end of the year". She feels however, that the grain support should be phased out gradually rather than stopped suddenly. She anticipates difficulties in the future, "...but if we all work hard and the cow calves - and if we could be given some more land -then we can manage". The three foster mothers in the village have approached the PA for more land, but the land which was suggested was too far away.

g) Evidence that the foster children are included in future life perspectives

What thoughts does Mariam have about the time when her foster children are adults?

She has been thinking about this, about the time when the boys will get married. The usual practice is that when a boy gets old enough, the (PA) will provide land for him to farm. (This is usually followed by the boy leaving home and establishing his own family). Mariam sees the children as part of her future life, as her own child will be. She anticipates that they will live near her and that they will have frequent contact.

Has she ever thought about what would happen if she became seriously ill, perhaps died?

"I have never thought about this. The children would have a problem, but I hope one of the other foster mothers would accept them".

4. Finding a place in the community

Mariam does not belong to this community, and neither do the children, one of whom is from Wollo in the north, thus they are not Oromo - the dominant ethnic group in this region. Both she and the children are Christians. She says she is gradually making friends, but her closest friend is one of the other foster mothers, **Hawa**, who is also a settler in this village. She feels she has little time to take part in social activities, but joins in religious holiday festivities and some coffee ceremonies.

Her relationships with the other foster mothers are good, although she does not have direct contact with **Fata** any longer "... she has six children to look after, and does not have much time, so I don't visit her". She stresses the importance of a good relationship between the foster mothers: "When one is sick, the others help by bringing food and caring for the children."

The children have a greater degree of community contact. They have friends at school and among neighbouring children, but also keep close contact with the other foster children.

Mariam expresses some doubts about trusting other people ".....you can't depend on them. For example, a neighbour promised to help me care for my oxen and farm, but he drank a lot, and as a result, some of the crops were lost". She feels it is difficult to get good help in the community because nearly all the farmers are family heads who are responsible for ploughing their own family's land. Her situation reflects the position of widows in the community in general, unless they have male relatives, compounded by the fact that she is a settler in the village.

4.1. Assessment of the other foster homes using the sustainability criteria

During the same period, assessments were carried out with the other two foster homes. Below is a summary of the findings.

Hawa is the elderly foster mother to Ahmed, 12 years, from Wollo, and Yimam, 8 years, from Limu. They share the Muslim faith. Hawa, like Mariam, is a settler in the village, and she attributes part of her failure to becoming self-sufficient to the fact that the PA gave her poorer land than Fata, who belongs to the community. However, recently her 18-year old daughter died and she says the community mourned with her, making her feel more accepted, although she has no intimate friends in the village. She has however a good relationship with Mariam. They co-operate in different ways, and can lend and borrow money between them. She feels at this point that a good relationship with the community is more important than having a new husband. Nevertheless, her harvest has been relatively good and she also has the livestock provided by the project.

There has been concern in the project about the sincerity of the intentions of Hawa. Although agreeing to the terms of the contract, which stipulated that the foster mothers

should preferably not have children of their own living in the home, Hawa continually tried to bring her three children to stay with her. At present, her 15-year old son lives in the home, and an 18-year old son has also lived in the house over long periods. It was Kasa, the eldest of all the foster children, living with Fata, who finally told the staff that Hawa's son mistreated her two foster children, beating them and ordering them to work for him. Hawa also made the foster children do all the work at home, while her children went free.

Ahmed and Yimam were very wary in sharing such information with the staff, and could only do so at a later date in a situation where they felt safe. Notes on the health of the children at this stage show that Yimam had been successfully treated for pulmonary tuberculosis. Both were in school, and Ahmed was helping Yimam to learn the alphabet. The children had good friends at school and in the neighbourhood. They washed in the stream with the others, and went to school together with them.

Concerns were expressed by Hawa about Yimam, which were also known to the staff from the time he was in the shelter. Yimam was without doubt the most depressed and withdrawn of all the children in the Dora Ghibe shelter.

After some time he was able to tell his story to the social worker. He remembered that one day his mother left him behind to go to the market. He was about 3-4 years old at that time. He tried to follow her, but was not able to cross a river in flood, and was later found half-drowned and taken to the Dora Ghibe shelter. There he was unable to explain himself and very frightened. A rumour arose (which the child unfortunately overheard) that his mother had thrown him into the river in desperation. It is not certain whether these were real memories Yimam was expressing, or whether he had constructed a story based on what he had heard from others. There was no doubt however that he had been through a particularly traumatic experience.

During the assessment it was noted that Yimam has begun to play with the other children, and certainly looks much less depressed than he did a year ago in the centre. He smiles and greets us in a natural way.

Ahmed was still brooding over what could have happened to his mother in Wollo, but does not talk about it as much as he used to. He could eventually share with the staff his that he remembered that all the people from his village had been evacuated from the north to this area. His mother and baby sister were sick and admitted to a health post which he could name. This was the last time he saw her, , and he has no news about whether she is still alive. His father died in the shelter after they arrived here.

In spite of the assurances given by Hawa regarding her close relationship with the children, the suspicions of the staff were confirmed by Kasa and later on the decision was taken to terminate Hawa's contract as a foster mother, (see pg.16).

Fata was at that time a well-respected woman in the community with a good network of friends. She was divorced from her previous husband, and has no biological children staying with her. She is a Muslim, and had responsibility for 6 foster children of the same faith.

The children were the boys Kasa, 12 years, Indris and Kadir, about 11 years, Zamedi 9 years, and the girls Kanji 9 and Fatima 7. None of the children were related. Kasa came from Wollo, the rest are from Limu and ethnically Oromo.

During our assessment visit it was noted that the children were all playing and laughing outside together with neighbouring children. The walls of the *tukul* were decorated with their drawings.

Fata could not yet produce enough food to cover their needs, this year yielded 6 quintels of maize, some sorghum and *teff*. We noted that she seemed to be in a better position than the other mothers and asked her to comment on this. She explained that "*....the other two use different people to help them; I use the same person to plough, but use another for weeding. I trust my helper because of his religious background.*" She added somewhat cryptically- "*....it depends how you approach people*". She felt that apart from the trustworthy help, her increased food production was because of the attention she gave to weeding and protection of the crops from wild animals. She had also bought pesticides with her salary. Fata said she was brought up in the town, "*....so she does not have especially wide knowledge of agriculture - but I have a great interest in the welfare of my children*". She told us that Hawa brought her eldest son to help in the harvest, and that he ploughed for both the other mothers. However, he did not go about this in the right way, which would be to honour certain traditions of providing food and coffee to helpers, and also consult the other farmers. This was a main cause of their harvest failing, according to Fata.

Fata has two oxen, but mentioned that if she had a third ox, she would be able to get the community to plough her fields free-in other words she could utilise the *kota* system to full benefit. In addition, she had 7 sheep, a cow and chickens. She had no other means of generating income.

She described her relationship with the children as becoming stronger by the day, and felt they accepted her as a mother. There were no serious conflicts in the family. They shared their problems with her, and felt comfortable asking her for things they needed. Fata underlined the positive behaviour of the children in her account of them -their improvement in many areas, how they helped her, their obedience, a characteristic in children highly prized in Ethiopia. She emphasised that she ate together with her children, thus implied that this was a different practice from the other foster homes. The children helped her with various tasks when they came from school.

We also observed a natural friendly contact between Fata and the children. The children were in a good nutritional state, except for Lobaba who is very thin, but lively. They all went to school but for Fatima, 7 years. She had tried two weeks ago, but walked too slowly and complained she felt tired and sick once she got there. She was also afraid of the numerous baboons on the road which have been known to attack people. Because of these factors, she had been allowed to stay at home.

All the children were healthy except Kasa, who has signs of early trachoma (a serious eye disease) and a troubling chronic cough. Fata has given him egg yolks and butter, traditionally used as a panacea to cure illness. A year ago, the children talked a lot about their past, but this has not been the case this year. She noted that from being withdrawn and quiet, they now seemed much happier and more playful. "*The children are now looking towards their future. Even if they raise questions about their background, I'm sure they still love me! God has given them a new home, but when they grow up and ask questions, I don't know what I will answer them*". Fata did not stop the children from talking about their past lives, but neither did she actively encourage this. An interesting comment made by the staff following up the children, was that several of them gradually

started to remember details of their past which they were not able to recall during their more unsettled period. This is not an unusual finding in persons who have been through traumatic phases in their lives.

Occasionally, the children were disciplined by spanking, but a confidential conversation with Kasa confirms that in this family the children do not feel discriminated against or abused in any way.

Fatima was the child Fata was most concerned about, and she reminded us of the story of how Fatima had fallen into a latrine during her time in the Dora Ghibe shelter. She believed that this has affected her mind ever since. Already at this stage it was observed that Fatima had an intellectual handicap, which contrary to the explanation given in the latrine story, was most likely to have been there from birth.

Fata was fully conversant with the project's aims of self-sustainability, and also emphasised extra oxen as key factors in this. She planned to sell local beer and *injera* and had contacted a person to help her install local beehives.

Fata's vision of the future for her family was expressed thus: "The property will belong to both the children and me; my girls will marry and visit me, and call me their "big mama". As to the issue of marriage regarding herself, Fata said "What's the use of me having a husband since when my children grow up, the boys will help me farm the plot. Anyway, no man will love children who are not his own".

Fata felt that if anything should happen to her, the community would care for the children. "*Each of the children will be given a home "since they and I belong here"*".

Kasa followed our team on the path leading to the road, and in our conversations with him as we walked, he confirmed our fears that the two foster children living with Hawa were not well treated, and that Hawa was not truthful to the staff about her eldest son. This son beats the children and forced them to work for him. Kasa added that Hawa "*cursed the children a lot*" and they were not allowed to have contact with the other children in the other two homes. Kasa however had met secretly with Ahmed who had told him about their troubles.

4.2. Adjustments resulting from monitoring

As a result of the above assessments in **1989**, further investigations were made into the welfare of the children, Ahmed and Yimam, in Hawa's home. Finally, after consultations with the children and community leaders, this home was terminated in early 1990 and the children transferred to Fata bringing her family up to 8 children. Eventually, Hawa's *tukul* was also given to Fata.

The monitoring exercise pointed to the need for closer follow-up so the project administration was transferred from far-away Limu to the office in G. nearby. The follow-up /community development project of the remainder of the reunited children continued from the new project office in Limu Genet. This arrangement was necessary to cope with the huge distances and difficult terrain, but meant also a break in continuity of contact between the original staff and the children, known to each other for at least two years.

The staff from the G. office was also made up of competent professionals in areas such as health, agriculture, psychology and community development. The two remaining CBFH continued to receive regular visits, and the main focus was now on income generating. Honey production, sheep fattening for sale, milk products, *injera* baking were some of the initiatives attempted with more or less success.

The sustainability criteria (Annex 1) continued to be used to monitor all the homes included in the reunification project, including the CBFH. The CBFH were revisited by the adviser in 1990, and found to be progressing well, although not yet entirely self-sustaining.

4.3. Keeping well - an ongoing challenge.

The multiple health problems suffered by the foster children was a window into the general poor level of health of the population among whom they lived. Some of the children had increasing health problems which were of particular concern. Kasa's allergic/asthmatic condition was more pronounced, and finally led to him dropping out of school. Ahmed had a chronic ear infection and proved to be deaf in one ear. He stopped talking for some time and became withdrawn and suspicious. Notes made by the adviser (Elizabeth Jareg) raised the possibility of a strong psychological component to his "deafness", and in hindsight one can now understand that one was observing the first signs of what was to develop into serious psychiatric illness. Hapte developed the condition known as "mossy feet,"³ which caused him pain and embarrassment, and greatly reduced his ability to work and walk, in spite of active attempts by the project staff to treat him. His new stepfather tried to mitigate the situation by giving him and his own son a small coffee plantation to share close to the house, thus securing some income for them both. RB-E followed up by assisting in the procurement of coffee trees from the Coffee Board.

During the project the RB-E staff had a very good co-operation with the medical staff in Jimma hospital, the provincial hospital two hours drive from the village. Children were referred there when their condition required a greater level of attention than that which could be supplied by the struggling primary care services. The project also supported the local health posts and clinics to enable them to function adequately.

5. Efforts to invoke community responsibility

Attempts had been made to draw up a contract with the PA which clarified their responsibility for the CBFH after phase-out of the project. This proved to be impossible to achieve. While willing to allocate land and be of general assistance, the PA refused to accept more individualised responsibility for the children in terms of their longer-term personal welfare. They felt unable to take on such commitments in view of the poverty and general famine-proneness of the area.

However, the PA continued to be involved in certain decisions which had a bearing on the children's lives. For example, during 1990, Mariam married an elderly respected farmer in the village, of the Muslim faith. The marriage contract, supervised by the

³ A painful condition known as endemic elephantiasis, with marked swelling and skin changes especially to the feet. Caused by silica particles in red clay soil entering the skin and blocking the lymphatic system.

elders, was drawn up according to Sharia law, which, in the case of divorce, would compromise the property of the children. No mention was made of the fact that the *tukul* he was now living in with Mariam was the children's property. The issue was taken up with Mariam and her husband Aba, and in further consultations with the PA a new contract was drawn up ensuring the rights of the children to the assets financed by RB-E. The children were also made aware of this.

6. Phase out

Projects in the area, including the CBFH, were phased out in 1992. For several months before and following phase-out the area had become very insecure due to the Oromo uprising following the fall of Mengistu and the establishment of the present government.

The population of Ethiopia is made up of many ethnic groups, each with their own specific language and culture. Oromo people make up the largest group. There are continual tensions among different groups on issues such as political influence and leadership, territorial contentions, and language dominance.

Many of the project staff is Amhara, and living as they were in Oromo lands, they were endangered during this struggle for ethnic recognition and control. A very serious incident had occurred whereby project staff had been captured by members of the Oromo Liberation Front and held captive overnight, and threatened with being killed.

Similar incidents led to withdrawal of the staff for longer periods and affected planned activities prior to phase - out. As will become evident below, this had significance for attention to legal aspects concerning the foster children. Shortly after this, RB-E underwent considerable changes in their strategy and mode of operation, the main change being working with local/national partners instead of self-implemented projects. This led to withdrawal from many rural areas since most local NGO partners were to be found in and around Addis Abeba and other major towns at that time. Gradually, staff that had been associated with the foster projects were assigned to other tasks or left the organisation.

7. Ten years after: Follow-up of the children placed in the community based foster homes in December 2001.

7.1. The purpose of the follow-up

The purpose of the follow-up, as elaborated in the introduction, was two-fold:

- a) As part of Save the Children's global study into the issue of fostering children during emergency situations, we wished to gain insight into how these particular types of foster homes functioned over time. What lessons could be learnt that could be useful in the event of similar arrangements being established? What was not anticipated and planned for?
- b) The issue of "unfinished business." The author of this report felt strongly that the circumstances surrounding phase-out had not permitted a really well-planned exit from the project, which could in turn compromise the safety and longer-term life circumstances of the children. This was supported by present-day Save the Children Norway in Ethiopia, (SCNiE) and in particular by Tesfaye Diressie who also knew these children very well.

7.2. The follow-up team

The team carrying out this follow-up all had a special relationship to the foster children and the project as such. Tesfaye Diressie, now SCNiE's Information Officer, led the reunification team set up by RB-E in late December 1986. Haile W. Sillassie was employed as a field officer to trace and reunify the children from the Dora Ghibe shelter, and continued to work as a member of the project staff following up all the reunified children until the project phased out. Haile was from the area, but now lived and worked with an NGO in Addis Abeba. He joined the team during his annual leave. The team's driver during the whole journey, Ato Tesfaye Hapte, was also assigned to these projects and knew the children well.

Tesfaye Diressie and Haile W. Sillassie had previously paid a short visit to the foster homes to ask for permission to carry out the assessment, and discuss preparations. They had been very well received by the foster children.

Elizabeth Jareg acted as adviser to the programme throughout its duration, and had almost yearly visits to Ethiopia. She knew the foster children through lengthy visits together with the project staff. With the participation of the staff, she developed assessment tools and further developed the concept of the CBFH. Unfortunately, it was not possible to have other significant members of the original project staff on the team, since most now live abroad.

However, it was a special experience to find persons who knew the project/children very well in the area itself. For example, Ato Biya, who had been working as a guard in the Dora Ghibe shelter, and continued as an employee of RB-E's project in G., still lived there. He has been a 'guardian angel' for the foster children. The children were relying on him for guidance and protection as he was the only person whom they knew which still connected them to RB-E. He facilitated the work of the team by supplying information as well as establishing links with the local government officials. Ato Biya has served as a voluntary representative of RB-E, even though he had no contact with the organization.

The team stayed in the nearby town of Jimma while carrying out this assignment. Their daily visits to the young persons they had known as children, and the remaining foster mother, was a highly emotional experience for the team, as they listened to their stories. At the same time, the team was attempting to assess what further action would be necessary to secure the rights of the now young adults.

7.3. The first meetings

The first stop of the team was Woiija village, the site of the original three community based foster homes. They walked along well-worn paths, greeting passing villagers staring curiously at them. Woiija village does not often get visits from outsiders, let alone foreigners. A short walk took them to **foster-mother Fata's tukul**. The home is well-worn, in need of repair. The old fig tree, the one which Fata believed to enact an evil influence on the home, is still there. The fir-tree hedge lining the path up to the door, remembered as foot-high saplings, is now an almost impassable barrier.

Kasa, now a slight young man of 25, came to greet them. He was overcome with shy happiness. The team also greet **Fatima**, now about 18, the youngest of the girls in Fata's foster family smiles, but does not speak. We learn that **Lobaba** was reunited with her mother who finally claimed her in 1993. Zehara, Kasa's young wife, appears with their

baby son Jemal in her arms. The team are welcomed into the foster home, and soon are joined by two elderly neighbours, one of whom stays throughout the visit.

Once again, the family are informed that the purpose of the visit is to find out how their lives have been following the end of the project, and to also learn from them as young adults how they experienced being brought up in the foster homes.

The team learned that **Fata** no longer lived with them. Following her conversion to Orthodox Christianity in 1994, her habits, including the way she prepared food, changed, and the foster children asked her to leave. Kasa continued to live here with his wife and son, and also looked after Fatima. In addition, he told the team that he also cared for Ahmed, now about 20 years old, who lived nearby in the garden of the old *tukul* built for foster mother Hawa. The significant role Kasa played in supporting and mentoring all the remaining foster children became very evident.

In response to the team's general question as to how their lives have been, Kasa related his story of a critical time during the last famine period in the area two years ago. Fata, who was then living in the town of Jimma, had appealed to Kasa for help and he looked after her for three months. She had married a tailor, but had divorced him shortly after and moved to another place.

The discussion turned to the feasibility of Muslims and Christians living together in the same household. The elderly neighbour, himself a Muslim, said perhaps it would be possible when the children were small, but as they grew up they would be aware of their origin and how they should behave. People from the community would begin questioning them: "*Why are you living with a Christian? A Muslim? At some point, you have to take responsibility for your own religion*".

Kasa was of the firm opinion that it was better to grow up in a home with one religion. The preparation and choice of food, as well as the matter of prayer, were central issues around which conflict could arise.

Fatima, although she listened to the conversation, did not volunteer any opinions, and when the team tried to involve her, she smiled shyly but remained silent. Kasa remarked that Fatima "*still acts and thinks like a small child, her memory is poor and she does not pay attention to hygiene*". In a later conversation, Kasa reminds the team of the story that Fatima fell into a latrine in the Dora Ghibe shelter, and that this event "*caused her to become retarded*". (The underlying belief here is that when Fatima fell into the latrine, the devil took the opportunity to afflict some damage on her such as making her deaf, mute, or insane. This is the cultural explanation behind the incident of falling into the latrine or any thing of that kind. They are not referring to the direct physical damage from the act of falling).

Fatima became pregnant and gave birth to a baby on the 30th. October this year. The baby died at birth. There was no woman to help her, although Kasa helped her as best he could. The other foster mother Mariam also visited her on the day of the birth, and consoled and guided her. It was indicated to the team that there may have been a reluctance to help Fatima in the village because the baby was born out of wedlock. Tesfaye and Haile, preparing for the present follow-up, visited Fatima just after the birth, and found her shivering with shock and saying "*my baby is not here*".

In a private conversation between Tesfaye Diressie and Kasa, the latter was finally able to reveal the truth about Fatima's pregnancy. The father of the baby was Ahmed, who several times had insisted in sleeping with Fatima. Although Kasa had tried to talk him out of this, Ahmed became very threatening, and Kasa was frightened that he would harm one of the household if he was opposed. He did not think that Ahmed, living as he did in his own world, had fully understood the responsibility he had for Fatima's pregnancy and the birth. Ahmed has never raised the subject of Fatima's pregnancy, or what became of the child.

How did Kasa see Fatima's future? *"If she wants to marry somebody that is alright; if not, we will continue to look after her and advise her"*. When asked whether her intellectual retardation may be a hindrance to her getting married, Kasa replied that *"...she may get well after a few years"*, which prompted the team to discuss with him the likely permanent nature of Fatima's condition. Kasa also suggested that Fatima should be helped to get contraceptives.

According to Kasa, Fatima did not contribute much in helping with the household *"She mostly just sits around"*. However, she had good contact with Kasa's little son Jemal, and Zara, Kasa's wife.

7.4. A confrontation with the reality of project phase-out

During the last famine Kasa became desperate. By this time he also had a wife and baby to look after, as well as Fatima and Ahmed. At the beginning of the drought the combined livestock assets of the family were two oxen, one cow and two sheep. When Ahmed developed his mental illness and left to live by himself, Kasa divided the assets between them. During the drought, he sold the oxen for 600 birr, and bought a bullock for 300 birr, keeping the remaining money to buy food. With the bullock he was able to continue to plough and thus get a share of the grain (*kota* system). He also sold the cow for 500 birr and bought a heifer. With the money left over from this sale, he financed, for the first time in his life, a trip to Addis Abeba. He was worried about the condition of Ahmed, but also by that time they had no food or other assets left.

His mission was to inform RB-E that he and his family were in a desperate situation and that he was intending to sell all the cattle. He wanted to show that he was loyal to the organisation. He was in a dilemma over whether it was possible for him to sell the cattle, the most important assets the children owned, without the knowledge of RB-E.

Kasa arrived in Addis Ababa with great hopes of receiving a warm reception from the employees of R B-E he knew in G. Contrary to his expectations, the guards at the RB-E office, regarding him with suspicion, denied him a chance to enter the compound. Remembering some of the names of the old G. staff, he was finally permitted to meet one of the ex-staff of the project who knew Kasa and the foster children from the outset.

However, she was unable to help him. She told him that Redd Barna had phased out of that project and thus there were no funds available for it. It was also unfortunate that the Resident Representative was not in the country at the moment so that perhaps some contingency money could be made available. Kasa was rather confused. He couldn't understand why the very people he had received so much help from now appeared to be insensitive to his situation. For him all the employees that had been working for RB-E in G. were like relatives who could never let the children down.

Eventually, he asked about Haile and was told that he was working for a national NGO situated on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. A RB-E driver took Kasa to meet Haile, who, while happy to see Kasa, did not know what to do to help him. Finally, Haile managed to borrow money from friends, at least enough for the return fare.

As soon as he reached Woija village, Kasa sold the remaining cattle. He knew now he was the only person who could decide what to do in order to save the lives of the children including himself.

7.5. Struggling for life, and looking back

Kasa continued to be plagued by ill health. His asthmatic condition had progressed, and it is likely that he has developed chronic obstructive lung disease. He is very short of breath, suffering from sharp chest pains at night. It is 6 years since he had treatment for his ailment. He has had antibiotic injections at the health clinic from time to time for chest infections, in all fifteen times. He found it increasingly difficult to farm with his condition, and could no longer carry heavy loads. He also suffered from a fungal infection but could not afford the necessary ointment.

The team asked him to look back to the time of the project and share his thoughts on it with them. Kasa expresses gratitude for what the project had done for the children, saying if it were not for that help, "*...we would all have been beggars or dead*".

In his opinion, the agreement with the foster mothers to bring them up was good. However, their major problem has been one of ill-health, referring to himself, Fatima and Ahmed. Kasa emphasises the centrality of labour contributions in building his relationship with the community. An intricate system of labour sharing, especially among the men, is crucial to survival and also indicates how one is perceived and accepted in the community. "*As long as I can work, I have good relations with the community*". Kasa had for several years now actively participated in this arrangement. However, now that his health was failing, he was less active. Usually, his asthmatic condition was worse during the rainy season, but this year, it had been continuously bad.

The three years of schooling Kasa had enabled him to shoulder the responsibility of secretary of the Muslim society in the village, taking minutes at the meetings. He was obviously proud of having this function. However, in a later conversation alone, he expressed sadness at not being able to continue school because of his health problems. He remembered he was particularly good at maths, and would have liked to learn some trade such as mechanics or carpentry. There were in any case no possibilities for that in the nearest town, he would have had to go to Jimma.

The harvest this year had yielded some sorghum and 1/4 of an acre's share of *teff* (a small grain unique to Ethiopia and used to make the national bread "*injera*"). How could he have improved his agricultural yield? Kasa replied that his health was linked to this. However, generally he sees a bright future in agriculture and knew there were ways to get loans and extend his farm.

Regarding contact between their home and the other foster-mother in the village, Mariam, who lives only a ten-minute walk away, Kasa said that although "*Mariam greets us at the market places, she doesn't really visit us*" Kasa thought she felt she had enough responsibility looking after her own family and could be afraid that demands would be made on her,

The team discussed Mariam's proposal that Fatima should come to live with her, but Kasa did not think that would be a good idea. He pointed out that Mariam has seven family members, it would be difficult for her to take Fatima in addition. Kasa had also now little contact with Hapte, still living with Mariam and her husband Aba.

7.6. Ahmed

Before the team met with Ahmed, Kasa described how his illness developed. About four years ago, he stopped being concerned about his personal hygiene. He withdrew from social contact with people, and became convinced that the *injera* he was given to eat, was poisoned. He started smoking cigarettes. At times Ahmed suffered from hallucinations, he "saw" people shooting at him, and has had periods when he believed there were planes under the ground.

Kasa said that he occasionally asked to eat with them, but had his pride saying "*Can I borrow some beans from you?*" Ahmed survived through working as a daily labourer, and people generally left him in peace. After his illness developed, it became difficult for him to live with Kasa, and the community decided he could move into the *tukul* which originally had been one of the CBFH, later taken over by Fata. However, he gradually dismantled the home and sold the material, and lived now in a very small, roughly built grass house which he built in the compound of the *tukul*.

The team asked Kasa to invite Ahmed to Kasa's home to avoid suddenly descending on him without warning. Ahmed arrived with Kasa, but barely looked at the team, hung his head and refused to talk. Gradually he became less suspicious of the team's presence, as he was given gifts they had brought for the foster children, in accordance with custom although they were unable to communicate with him. However, he permitted the team to visit his hut together with Kasa. There was barely room for one person inside, and it was alarming to see that Ahmed had a small fireplace in the room, close to the rough grass wall. After several visits during the team's stay, Ahmed finally offered the visitors a smile, but could still not converse with them. Kasa appeared to be able to understand his communications (in Oromiffa language) to some extent. It was with sadness the team remembered the 12-year old Ahmed who chatted quite freely with the staff.

Through Kasa we came to know what had happened to the other children who were once part of Fata's family.

Three of the younger boys, **Kadir, Indris and Zamedi**, had been adopted by other farmers in the village before the project phased out. The relocation of Kadir and Indris had taken place during a 4-5 month period during which all staff had to withdraw from the area because of widespread civic violence, during which some of the staff, who was for the most part Amhara, had been captured and threatened with their lives by the Oromo front. This period of unrest took place following the overthrow of the Mengistu regime in 1991, and the establishment of the present regime.

When the staff returned they found that Fata had facilitated these adoptions in their absence, possibly because she felt unable to cope with such a large family without the continued presence of support from the project. The staff set about following up the three boys who had been adopted to ascertain their welfare. It was established at the time that the boys appeared to be happy in their new homes, which were in the same village, and they still had contact with their foster siblings and Fata.

Zamedi was adopted by a neighbour of Fata before the project phased out.

Kadir was adopted by a man and his wife originally from Gojam in the north. Kasa says *"he was in good hands, and well cared for"*. However, when Kadir became 18, his adoptive father and his wife decided to return to Gojam after buying an hotel there, leaving his assets in Woiya village for Kadir to manage. Unfortunately, Kadir developed "bad habits", drinking and passing the nights in Jimma, squandering his inheritance. When his adoptive father returned to visit him, he was very disappointed to learn what had happened, and rejected Kadir. Kadir, feeling guilty, came to Kasa for advice. Kasa, while scolding him for his wayward behaviour, offered to look after Kadir's cow, since the animal was the only security he had left. However, it seemed that Kadir had already sold half the cow to someone else. These people complained and the cow was sold to them for 550 birr. Kadir shared this with Kasa, who bought a tape recorder. Kadir bought batteries so they could enjoy music together. All this happened just before the project phased out, and during the prolonged conflict between the Oromo front and the new government forces. Eventually, Kadir joined the army to fight in the recent Ethiopian/Eritrean war, and sadly was killed at the front.

Indris was also adopted through the intervention of Fata. Although it seems he was happy with his adoptive family, tragically he was bitten by a rabid dog and died some few years ago.

Zamedi was placed for adoption by Fata with a man she knew in the village seven years ago, apparently through a written agreement. The project staff were aware of this, and at the time approved the adoption. We were able to meet and interview Zamedi in Buna township, the administrative headquarters of the area. The first two years he lived with his adoptive father in Buna, who ran a small hotel there. According to Haile, who was following Zamedi up at this point, their relationship was quite good, and Zamedi attended school. Haile found it difficult to follow him up since Zamedi ran away when he saw Haile coming. We presumed this was because the adoptive father had forbidden him to talk to Haile.

During the team's conversation with Zamedi, he says that his adoptive father did not beat him physically *"...but he beat me with food"* - meaning that he was fed very little but expected to work very hard, and felt continually exploited. Zamedi consulted Kasa about his problem, and the latter offered him to come and stay in his home, so they could work together. Zamedi lived with Kasa for one year, taking jobs as a daily labourer. He also presented himself for recruitment to the war, but was rejected due to a finger injury. During this time, Kasa and Zamedi went to the *Kebelle* (the local authorities) and presented a claim of 60 birr against Zamedi's adoptive father for compensation for his labour. This was granted and Kasa was given 10 birr by Zamedi. Eventually, another family offered Zamedi a home, and he is still living there, paying for his keep through voluntary labour for half the share of the harvest.

Reflecting on the time he spent as Fata's foster child, Zamedi said that they all had a good relationship when they were small. *"As we grew up, Fata came under the influence of her neighbour, T. (later Zamedi's adoptive father). She sold shelves to him belonging to me, with which I was planning to open a small shop, without consulting me. T. also gave her alcoholic drinks at times"*. Zamedi does not feel exploited at all in the family he now stays with, of his own choice. However, when asked him if he thinks it would have been

better to continue staying on in Fata's home, he says "...yes, then perhaps I could have claimed some of the land." As it is, he is now landless.

Yimam was also adopted by a farmer family in the village, and the team were told by Kasa that his mother had been found and they had some contact. Yimam was unable to recognise his mother, and continued to stay with his foster family which he felt comfortable with.

The team also visited the only remaining foster mother in Woiya village, **Mariam**, still staying with her husband Aba. Children from her previous marriage and a daughter from the present one stay with her, as well as the remaining foster son **Hapte. Tefera** was reunited with his mother some years ago. The mother invited Mariam to her home, a couple of visits were exchanged between them, and then no more contact.

Mariam looked well, and welcomed the team warmly. She said that up until the recent famine they managed well, and then they had to sell cattle and coffee trees, but were able to retain their land. She said there were good relationships between Hapte, herself and her husband Aba, and added that the proof of this is that if Hapte had not felt happy with them, he would have left the home. There are also good relations between Hapte and the community, and in fact he receives praise for the way he conducts himself. The *tukul* which was given to her and the foster children before her marriage, is now occupied by Aba's son, who recently came back after two year's service at the war front. He had received 2000 birr from the government in compensation for this. His parents gave him the house as a wedding present when he got married. There is a friendly relationship between him and Hapte we are told. However, the *tukul* which was given to Aba's son is the rightful property of Hapte, something the team will return to).

Mariam continued to be partly involved in the lives of Kasa and Fatima, who live only five minutes walk from her home. She related an incident when Fatima, scolded by Kasa when she failed to tie up a sheep, ran away and stayed with her for three days. During that time, Mariam washed and oiled her hair, saying that Fatima was unable to look after her personal hygiene properly. She then reconciled Kasa and Fatima. It seems that Fatima has also run away to another family once, but returned by herself. The team wondered if she was trying to avoid the unwanted attentions of Ahmed. "*Fatima is slow like a sheep*" Mariam remarked. She sometimes visited her with *injera* during her pregnancy - and said the birth happened so fast she was unable to get there on time, and confirmed that the baby died at birth.

The team asked Mariam about her thoughts concerning her role as a foster mother. She replied: "*I looked after the children as if they were my own family; they were given education and kept clean. The arrangement was good for me, and if not for the famine all would have been well. If you don't believe me - ask Hapte*"

Mariam told the team about their plans to help Hapte get land and build a house so he could eventually establish his own family. They will provide him with coffee plants and oxen.

In a later conversation with Hapte alone, he confirmed that "*he had no bad feeling in his stomach*" about his foster parents, and that Aba was "*a good person*" The land originally given to Mariam by the Peasant's Association has been tilled by different people. Hapte could use the land, but felt he could not ask for this to be his sole property. He felt confident that the people in the village would help him build a *tukul* "*because they like*

me.” However, he agreed that written agreements about his property were important to avoid conflict in the future, since he was also uncertain about his ownership status. He emphasised that his relations with the community were very important to him. Hapte said his foot disease, which plagued him throughout his childhood, had now improved through treatment with holy water. He talked hopefully about his future.

The team also had a conversation with Aba about Hapte’s future. He agreed that a contract in writing should now be drawn up between himself and Hapte “.....*only if a person has evil in his heart would he be against such an agreement*” Also, when he dies, the agreement will show that Hapte is entitled to his share of the property, since he regarded him as his son. We also asked Aba about what he thought about the arrangement of the CBFH. He said he thought it was good since it allowed the children to grow up and become natural members of the community. When we asked him about Ahmed's illness, he said that only health professionals in a big hospital could say what had caused it.

7.7. Follow-up issues and recommendations made

7.7.1 Issues of ownership of land and property

While in Buna township, the team visited the administration, where they also came into contact with Ato Dereje Shiferaw, the other previous family tracer now working in the administration, and Biya, a former guard working for RB-E during the time of the Dora Ghibe shelter. It turned out that Biya had continual contact with Kasa and felt a responsibility to help the children out of his own sense of social responsibility.

The Deputy Administrator, who had only been working in the local administration for one year, expressed appreciation of the visit and said that RB-E was still “fresh in the minds of the community” for the work they had carried out. There were no international or national NGOs now working in this area, although the needs were still considerable. The administration were impressed at the fact that the team had come back to follow up the children. They were helpful in locating old records of the project, but unfortunately no records of any agreements made between the administration and the project regarding the assets of the children could be found. The team also visited the Woreda administration on the issue of the house left behind as an income generating project to benefit the foster children. There was no document on this agreement to be found in their archives, but the present administration was willing to work on a new one.

Before phasing out, RB-E had financed the building of three houses in Buna town which were to be used as a source of income for the foster children. The team visited this place together with a representative from the administration. The children had rented out the houses, composed of 3 rooms and kitchens built together with local materials in an elongated building, for 30 birr/month. The house was surrounded by a generous plot of land which belonged to it, although the boundaries were not clearly demarcated. Because there was no document that confirmed that this house actually belonged to the children, some of the land had been taken over by neighbouring families.

During this first follow-up in November/December 2001, it was also found that there was no written document confirming the exact amount and location of the land given by the Peasants Association to the foster homes. Thus over the years some of what Kasa had understood to be “their land” was taken over by others. It was recommended by the team that this issue should be addressed during the next follow up, but unfortunately the team

did not get time to meet the relevant Peasant's Association, so the issue is still pending and will be addressed during further follow up.

7.7.2 Follow-up August 2002

The issue of the contract between Hapte and Aba was followed up by a team from SN-E who visited G. in August. Hapte expressed great comfort at seeing them again. Since time was limited to complete the business, he was assured that the matter would have full attention when they returned next time.

The follow-up team also visited the regional Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) office, where they briefed the head and other senior staff regarding the foster children, the previous projects carried out by RB-E, the assessment in December 2001 and the follow up plan. MOLSA was unaware of the issue, since as mentioned previously, there were no properly functioning social welfare authorities during the time RB-E was in the area. They expressed their willingness to co-operate in following up the children. The team were informed that an employee of MOLSA was assigned to Buna town, and that this person could start to be involved in the follow up of these foster families/previous foster children. The team were unable to meet with this person due to the meetings mentioned above involving local authorities.

7.7.3 Issues concerning compensation for exploitation

Recommendations were made to assist **Zamedi** in the matter of him seeking compensation through the courts because of the several years - long exploitation he was subjected to by his foster father. This matter was also discussed with SCN-E's lawyer W/ro Amsale. During a follow-up visit in August 2002, she accompanied the team and had consultations with Zamedi. Although she informed Zamedi that he was likely to win the case, in view of the very lengthy procedures a court case would involve, she advised him to settle the matter out of court by requesting an immediate compensation for 1/3 of the sum he was intending to apply for. The head of the Administration Office in Chirra was also informed about this and approved the matter. Zamedi took the advice and with W/ro Amsale's help wrote a letter to the court stating that he has designated Ato Biya to follow up this request on his behalf. The Registrar Officer at the Regional Supreme Court was also informed about the case of Zamedi. Zamedi was found to be living currently with Ato Biya.

7.7.4 Health matters

Following the visits made in December 2002, recommendations were made for further investigation/treatment of Kasa's lung condition and Ahmed's serious mental illness. During the follow up in August 2002, the team learnt that Kasa was seriously ill during the year. Also Fatima had suffered from malaria and Kasa's son from malnutrition. All the former foster children had also acute shortages of food. None of them got medical support, and Kasa said it was difficult for them to get the so-called "free letter" which gives access to free medical treatment from the Administrative office. He had also experienced that the clinic gave less attention to persons who came with "free letters". Kasa was afraid to take medicine without adequate food. The team discussed the health problems of the foster children with the Medical director of the Buna Health Centre, who promised to himself assess Kasa prior to an eventual referral to Jimma hospital. The team were asked to bring all the children who needed treatment, so that Fatima and Kasa's son

were also examined. The team supported with the appropriate medicines bought locally. A certain amount of varied food items were also given to the foster children.

The team also tried to persuade Ahmed to go to the health centre for examination, but he refused, saying he needed food, not medicine. The matter will be followed up at a later visit.

8. Reflections and lessons learnt

The findings of this follow-up exercise are presented in some detail in the above account, trying to capture at least fragments of a way of life and the enormous challenges facing village people in rural Ethiopia. The team felt humbled and impressed by what they learnt, and at the same time infused with the urgency to settle what was obviously “unfinished business” in relation to Save the Children Norway-Ethiopia’s responsibility for these now young persons. The following points reflect some of the main learning we were left with, and can be equally applicable to children in any poor, disaster-struck communities who lose or become separated from their parents.

8.1. The necessity for long-term protection and follow-up

The conviction that children placed in fostering situations need to be followed up into at least early adulthood grew stronger as the team became aware of the struggles and fate of some of the children. This is especially true in situations where external agencies, albeit with government support, take upon themselves to initiate fostering, and where there is no local authority willing or able to take on a long-term responsibility.

“Follow-up” does not mean continual intensive attention which could threaten the growth of autonomy and drive a wedge between the children and community. It means a form of protective oversight negotiated between the organisation, the foster families and the community, and could in this case for example, have taken the form of yearly visits, or, through the appointment of an overall guardian, a person approved of by the children. Obviously when circumstances change and local social protection/welfare authorities are in operation, they must bear the overall responsibility for the care and protection of children, and the role of non-government organisations becomes that of co-operating with them to build their capacity to do so.

Many forms of care of children in such circumstances seem to “phase out” at 16-18 years, not recognising the increased need for adult support and guidance as the young person grows towards adulthood and is expected to take on adult roles and responsibilities. This is also a time when many establish their own family. Considering the often significant financial and personal resources which have been invested in children at a younger age, it seems logical, and sound from a child development point of view, to follow the children through to a stage of viability and relative independence. A major effort needs to be made to build capacity in the young person to stand on his/her own feet.

This follow-up also demonstrates that not only do the protection needs change as children grow, but also the resources the environment can offer do so. Linking children and foster families with these resources and evoking responsibility from relevant authorities thus needs continual consideration.

8.2. Resilience and vulnerability side by side

The tenacity of these now young people in surviving and creating a life for themselves, lacking the unconditional support given to others who are living with their families, impressed the team members considerably. The detailed story of what Kasa did so that he and his family could survive the famine, utilising in a planned way what little he had, and travelling to Addis Abeba to try and get help, revealed remarkable strength in this sick young man. Zamedi's fight to get justice for the wrongs done to him, and Ahmed's efforts to live his life in spite of his serious illness also reveal resilience, but at the same time their vulnerability in terms of exploitation and the lack of means to access available health services. The tragic story of the relationship between Ahmed and Fatima, her pregnancy and birth, reveals the vulnerability of young girls who have no mother figure, and in Fatima's case, also handicapped by an intellectual disability.

There can be no doubt that their upbringing in the village environment, in contrast to an eventual institutional upbringing, has taught these young persons how to cope with the ever-present adversities in a drought-prone and underdeveloped area of rural Ethiopia, over four hundred kilometres from the capital. However, the lack of consistent, long-term protection has had, as we see, fatal and tragic consequences for some of the children.

8.3. Children relate to persons, not organisations

As the team discussed with the previous foster children, it became very clear that they understood their relationship with the then RB-E in very personal terms, not as participants in a project. Children, especially when they have lost their families, become attached to people who show genuine interest and affection for them. Following on from this, it was difficult to accept that RB-E had "phased out of their lives". One of them commented "You (meaning the RB-E staff) started off as parents and ended up as non-relatives!" "We have been waiting for you to come again". This is because the children wished to show the people who knew them from the beginning to know about the changes that happened in their lives, and to appreciate what they had achieved.

In spite of many sessions with the children discussing and explaining terms like "sustainability," "phasing out," it became clear that the children could only relate to the project staff *as persons involved in and concerned about their lives*. When the project phased out, in spite of explanations the staff had given, this was nevertheless experienced as yet another abandonment experience in their lives.

There is no easy answer to this huge difference in perceptions between children and an organisation's understanding of commitment and role, but certainly it is a fact that we as organisations need to understand and take into account. It calls for even more focus on discussing the limitations of organisational assistance and more transparency in revealing the differences between parental and organisational roles.

8.4. The importance of signed papers and legal agreements and paradigm shift in organisations

These issues became a focal point of the follow-up visit when it became apparent that the children were rendered unnecessarily vulnerable due to the fact that they did not have written agreements, legally endorsed, relating to vital possessions such as land, livestock

and houses and also in terms of their relationships to adults who had become their *de facto* parents.

Although as mentioned there were intentions expressed by the project, and also taken up several times by the adviser to address these issues, the circumstances surrounding the phase-out period did not allow these issues to be addressed properly. There were as described real security threats to the staff, and it was a time of enormous turmoil in Ethiopia when a totally new regime was being put in place.

Many factors also combined to explain why there was no follow-up at a later stage, a major one being the paradigm shift in RB-E from self-implemented projects to partner co-operation. There were no local organisations at that time in the area.

The follow-up team were very encouraged however, by the interest now shown by the local administration to co-operate in ensuring that the rights of the children are followed up in terms of written agreements, which will be stored in their office.

8.5. New issues arise as development proceeds

Perhaps stating the obvious, but a reinforcing argument for long-term follow up is that as children develop, each phase is accompanied by new challenges both pertaining to the special characteristics of that phase, and to the specific personality of the individual child, as well as gender. Since development is also embedded in the social and cultural environment, the relationship between children and their foster mother and the wider community also changes. This brings about positive changes but also challenging issues of protection, and at times crisis. It is the author's impression that these child development aspects are not adequately recognised and factored in when designing programmes for children without parental care.

8.6. The unpredictability of life

This account illustrates fully how the twists and turns of life shaped the outcome for the foster children as they grew into adults. Several crucial events, both in their personal environment and at national level, played significant roles, and were unpredictable at the time of the project. The conversion of Fata from Islam to Orthodox Christianity, which eventually led to her leaving the foster home; the recruitment of Kadir into yet another armed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea; and the development of such a serious mental illness in Ahmed were all unforeseen events.

All the children shared with the community the same risk of death through serious infectious disease; all were also susceptible to new periods of severe food shortage in this famine-prone area. It could also be expected that some of the more vulnerable children, and this vulnerability was evident in both Ahmed and Fatima during their childhood, were at risk of life-long psychological and social problems due to combinations of their experiences and biological make-up, especially if the level of care and protection was inconsistent.

Again, the importance of long-term follow-up arises, during which appropriate, often low-cost, simple interventions may be able to diffuse crisis and prevent serious consequences building up, or at least mitigate the effects. However, it should be kept in mind that a "protective follow up" must aim at building resilience and competence in the

children. That is, there must be a strategy which encourages children to learn from their actions or crises, to plan for their lives, to take precautions which protect them from danger.

8.7. The importance of a foster mother's relationships with the community

A central factor in the success or failure of the task facing the foster-mothers, and which was the focus of much discussion during the project, was their relationship with the Woiya village community. The quality of that relationship was also important in mediating relationships between the foster children and the community, and in this way, they could "weave" the children into the social fabric of village life.

Fata belonged to the village, and had brought up her family there. She was a respected person with a large network. She held regular meetings in her home with the religious community of which she was a part. She received help and support from other farmers in ploughing and harvesting her fields. Her contacts also led to her being able to successfully have adopted two of the foster children. However, it has to be said that her friendship with her neighbour Tesfaye turned out to be very poor and had serious consequences for her relationship with the children.

Mariam, an outsider, had little contact and support from the community during the early days of the project, but this changed significantly when she married **Aba**, a respected farmer with a wide network in the community. **Hawa**, also an outsider, was unable to develop good relationships with people in the village, and complained continually of lack of support. This was exacerbated when she brought her elder son to stay with her who through his behaviour alienated her even more. Her poor relationships were certainly significant in leading to the breakdown of this home.

The main lesson to be learned is that foster families are more likely to succeed when they belong to the village where the foster home is, are respected members of the community and have a supportive network of friends and relatives.

In the end, this turned out to be even more important in this particular project than "matching" the foster children and foster mothers according to their place of origin, i.e. from the north of Ethiopia.

8.8. The centrality of shared labour as a bonding mechanism between the foster children and the community

All the children as they grew participated in the shared tasks related to collective subsistence farming in the community. During the Marxist regime under president Mengistu, there was a strong emphasis on collective farming, and Woiya village was no exception. Although at the time of the project, people did own smaller plots of land distributed to them by the Peasants Association, there were also large areas of farm land which had to be cultivated and harvested through collective efforts. In addition, the village had common grazing areas where they took turns in herding and grazing each others animals. Several of the boys emphasised this work as vital to their relationships with and status in the community, as well as the learning it involved. The labour **Hapte** had contributed allowed him to expect help from the community in building his *tukul* when he eventually would establish his own family. **Kasa** expressed his fears that his

illness may prevent him from taking his share of the burden, underlining the fact that support from the community is based mainly on *mutual exchange of services*.

The project gave us the insight that the issue of shared work is every bit as important, perhaps more, for the survival and acceptance of the foster children as their few years of formal education.

8.9. The importance of a strong network among the children

The project's efforts to build good relationships among the whole group of foster children were to prove a sound long-term investment. The bonds of friendship developed among them, talked about by them in terms of sibling relationships, were, and continued to be, a constant source of support, sustenance and protection in time of crisis, with Kasa taking on a lead role. This provides a strong argument for supporting strong ties among fostered children, but not to the extent that they isolate themselves from other children/young people in the community. The group as a whole become more resilient in the face of the unpredictability of life, and the close friendships formed replace to some degree the losses those children have suffered. However, it is important that when leaders emerge in the group that they are positive role models, such as is the case with Kasa, and not destructive persons which could alienate the whole group from the community.

8.10. The importance of integrated support

The project addressed the holistic needs of the foster families in terms of shelter, health care, education, food and food security, including farming materials and animals, legal issues, and not least the psychological and social issues which continually emerged. Central to the latter was the relationship between the children and foster mothers, and among the children themselves, at school and with friends. There was sadness, anger, hope, despair. Thus the composition of the project team, which included a psychologist, a trained community development worker, an agriculturist, a nurse and with inputs from a specialist in income generating, was very useful. Naturally, not all the team members were present during home visits, but could be called on as necessary.

After the actual building of the foster homes through community input, the other "ingredients" followed in the course of frequent interactions between the staff and the families. *Time, and trained, patient and empathetic staff* were critical factors in building the kinds of relationships which were necessary to avoid a mechanical "hand-out" versus a truly supportive and developmentally-oriented one, which encouraged the families towards independence. Mutual respect, negotiating and listening skills were vital.

It was experienced that the different "components" became merged during follow-up. For example, a discussion on food security could lead to one on relationships with the community; a discussion on the health condition of one of the children could expose isolation, being harassed at school and withdrawal from social contact.

While recognising that not all foster programming will necessarily be able to receive the same degree of attention as described in this project, the *value of integrating different forms of support* and the time taken to build more genuine forms of relationships between project staff and families remains.

It must also be noted that the project team were also all involved in following up a large community development project and other reunified children, in addition to the community-based foster homes.

8.11. The importance of continued tracing for relatives

This follow-up study revealed the importance of a perspective that recognises the possibility of parents or relatives being found or presenting themselves, even years after the initial foster placement was made. Parents were found through continued active tracing and /or vigilance in respect of information in the community which gave clues as to where family members may be.

In this project, active tracing was eventually replaced by vigilance, as the sources of good tracing information dried up. Several of the children, after they had been transferred from the Dora Ghibe shelter to the foster homes, appeared to have difficulty in remembering their past life. This was, one suspects, not only a function of age, but also due to the impact of the emotional and physical stress they had been experiencing for some years, and the uncertainty of their new situation. The project staff noted that as the foster children gradually felt safer and more settled, memories began to return.

An important action was taken on behalf of the two unrelated boys from the northern province of Wollo, when the staff accompanied them for several weeks on what was to be a futile attempt to trace surviving family members. Villages, hospitals and clinics were visited, all manner of people consulted, all to no avail. It was not possible to firmly establish whether their families had survived the famine or not. However, this sad expedition did bring about a measure of closure for the two boys, in the sense that they now felt that everything had been done to try to find their parents.

It is interesting to note that in the case of 3 of the children, (Teferre, Lobaba and Yimam) their mothers gradually took contact with them after the project had phased out. We can only speculate about the exact reasons for this. Such information could be vital to understand more about why parents hesitate to reclaim their children during emergencies, and how programmes could deal with this. The project itself may have hindered parents in claiming their children. Did the children now “belong to RB-E”? At times this is how the community perceived and described the foster children. Were they not perhaps better off where they were? Will the foster-parent demand some kind of compensation for looking after my children? Will my children still love me and acknowledge me as a true parent? Or will they be angry with me for abandoning them? Mothers who lost their husbands during the famine may have felt unable to care for their young child and may also have been unaware that they could have got some support to do so from the project. It may be that mothers took contact with their children as they approached adulthood, wishing to bring them home now that they could play a truly supportive role in terms of work, economical inputs and of course moral support. They may recognise that as the children approached adulthood, they would in any case have to loosen the bonds to their foster parent.

The attitudes of the foster mothers to the eventuality of parents claiming their children was verbally positive, and the issue of this possibility was frequently discussed with them, especially at the beginning of the project. However, there would naturally have been an ambiguity about giving “their” children up. They may not have actively encouraged following up information from the children or others as to the whereabouts of their families. Having said this, there does not appear to have been resistance put up by the foster mothers when parents did actually turn up.

The lesson learnt here is to balance the act of keeping all possibilities for eventual reunion open, and taking active steps towards this, while helping children to form new, stable attachments. As children grow, one must be prepared to discuss with them the issue of

their missing parents, and recognise that loss and yearning for real or imagined parents takes many forms and expressions in the growing child, as they struggle with themes of belonging and identity.

The project's main focus was undeniably on the children and foster parents, and perhaps did not put enough effort into spreading the message that parents who did come forward, would have a full right to claim their children and also be supported within the general framework of the entire programme for reunification which was going on. However, it must be remembered that efforts to trace parents and relatives for all the foster children had already been done while they were with the entire group of children in the Dora Ghibe shelter.

8.12. Systematic monitoring with appropriate tools is essential

The progress of the children in the community-based foster home project as well as children in the reunification/follow up project in general was monitored utilising a tool, "Sustainability Criteria" which documented various aspects of their situation, including self-sufficiency, especially in terms of food and basic necessities, health, relationships within the family, and education. The criteria (Annex 1), relates to the family as a whole, functioning system moving towards sustainability.

This family assessment form was filled out at about four-six monthly intervals by project staff during a home visit on the basis of informal/structured conversations with the whole family, but also observations made by the staff and other significant persons, such as teachers. The information formed the basis for further discussions with the family, and more precise, realistic inputs. The assessments often heightened awareness in the family of the fact that the project would one day phase out, but also helped them in planning ahead and utilising their total resources. It was naturally very important to follow up agreed-upon action from both sides to maintain confidence in the project and revisit why things did not go as planned. It is always challenging within a relationship where one part has much more power, to achieve really genuine agreements.

It also provided a baseline from which to measure progress. Naturally progress in all areas was uneven, for example there could be evidence of good relationships developing between the children and foster mother, but perhaps one or two of the children had chronic health problems, which hindered them from going to school and participating in the work necessary to sustain the family.

The use of this monitoring tool in relation to all the reunited families in the project allowed for the gradual phase out of families who were coping well, and gave the staff more time to focus on those who needed extra attention.

The form was treated as confidential material and stored in locked facilities in the project office.

Our main lesson here is the usefulness of this type of monitoring process when carried out over time with patience and regularity. Retrospectively, one would now have developed the tool, not only with the staff's inputs, but on the *basis of recommendations from the children and foster mothers themselves.*

8.13. Active participation of the children is essential for the quality of the project

Throughout the entire project, the foster children were actively involved in developing and guiding the way forward, and were regularly consulted by the staff. Discussions could range from what the best way would be to make more income and how they might be involved in that, to decisions to continue schooling or not. The foster mothers who had a good relationship with the children appeared not to object to the fact that the children were given an unusually big role in deciding family matters. Care was taken however, not to undermine the authority of the foster mothers which was also central to their role. The children's participation was not only important to give them a sense of ownership over the project and some control over the direction of their lives, but was also vital for child protection.

Although abuse, exploitation and discrimination may have been suspected, it was only through conversations with the children that this could be confirmed more precisely. This meant that the children could also be consulted if drastic action, such as the closing of a home, had to be taken. The participation of the children in this project was carried out rather unobtrusively, as part of home visits, or, when more confidential matters had to be decided on, at the project office.

It can be concluded that involving the children in decision-making processes according to their evolving capacities both protected and empowered them to take responsibility for their own lives. This is in sharp contrast to the experience of children growing up in many institutions, where decisions affecting their lives may be taken over their heads with little or no consultation. Children who are discharged from such facilities may be much more disadvantaged in being able to take charge of their lives than those who have become used to doing so from an early age.

8.14. The involvement of the community and local authorities and other resources is vital to the sustainability of support

The project staff attempted from the outset to engage the local community and their leaders, as well as government authorities at local level, in the development of the project. The local community certainly were involved in choosing foster mothers and also providing land for the *tukuls* and farming land. However, further commitment was to prove challenging. Several attempts were made to ask the Peasants Association, which represented the Government at village level, to sign an agreement committing them to continued follow-up of the foster homes after phase-out. Although the meetings were very cordial, and steps were also taken on land allocation and other types of community assistance, the agreement never got signed. The project staff was told frankly that the community was not able to take upon such a responsibility in an area which was chronically prone to drought and animal disease. The recent experience of the famine had brought home to them the fragility of their existence.

The local authorities were weak and with little resources at that time, although the project staff had a continual relationship with them in view of their wider projects, which of course had to be approved and monitored by the local government officials. Assistance was gained in admitting the foster children to local schools, and in the matter of procuring the house for rental in a nearby township.

During phase-out the political turbulence due to the downfall of the government disturbed the possibility of more concrete agreements being made, and for a time there was in fact no functioning authorities at local level. However, by some miracle, many documents relating to the projects RB-E had worked with in the area were still preserved intact in the local administration headquarters.

Since, as was the case in many countries under communistic regimes, local non-government organisations were not encouraged, no local partner organisation existed which could be entrusted with follow-up of the children. This was still the case during our follow-up visit.

Lessons to be gained here are that while all efforts must be made to ensure the future well-being of children for whom the authorities are ultimately responsible, this may be exceedingly difficult in practice during times of crisis which also typically give rise to separated children. If the project had continued to have a “protective oversight” it would have been possible to make necessary agreements with local authorities once the situation had become stable again. However, by that time full phase-out was a reality.

This discussion is also relevant for the issue of *timing* of phase-out, and ideally this should obviously *not* be during times of political and military upheaval.

8.15. Fundamental dilemmas - the balance between intervention and “letting life take it’s course”

This dilemma accompanied the project to its rather abrupt end, and continued to challenge the team throughout the follow-up exercise. How to balance between the real protection, development and survival issues confronting this small group of children who were without family support, and at the same time avoid over-dependence on the programme? Do not children at some stage of their lives have a right and need to be dependent? When would be the best time to phase out and hope that the children were resilient enough to overcome adversities, and find meaningful lives for themselves? Where does the responsibility of an outside organisation end, also taking into account contexts where “handing over” is not a realistic option?

The study exposes stark vulnerability as well as true resilience and courage among the children. The knowledge we now have raises questions such as: could the two tragic deaths have been avoided if the project had still been involved to some degree? Could the sexual exploitation and pregnancy Fatima had to experience been averted? Could Kasa’s health have been more robust considering the responsibilities he had to shoulder? Could the project have done anything to prevent foster mother Fata from breaking with the family? Have we really understood how the vulnerability of fostered children, girls and boys, may increase in middle to late adolescence and in their transition to young persons?

On the other hand: given the enormous protection and development needs of children in Ethiopia, how could one have justified continuing with this project which had already utilised considerable resources?

Some of these issues are addressed in the conclusion. Obviously contextual factors will also play a role in decisions regarding the length and type of involvement of outside agencies in the follow-up of fostered children, as well as the resources available to the agency and the presence of potential partners.

However, there are serious concerns regarding our relationships with children, and their trust in adults whom they have confided in to protect and assist them. The fact that the rights of children in Ethiopia are far from met, and which non-government organisations can only hope to play a minor role in addressing, cannot be an argument for phasing out of a long-term relationship with children still in need of continued protection.

A critical question to be answered is: what level and length of support and follow-up of fostered children in communities is necessary to truly justify community care as the better option? In a situation where all families are in an actual or potentially critical situation, how can we recognise those who are most at risk?

Dilemmas related to something as fundamental as replacing the irreplaceable, i.e. growing up in substitute care instead of one's own family, will not go away. We need the emotional drive these challenges evoke in us to continue the search for good enough ways of assisting children who have lost their families. These existential issues need to be exposed and discussed as the world tries to cope with the innumerable disasters, man-made and natural, which bereave children of parental love and care.

8.16. Ethical issues in lesson's learnt exercises

A thorough consideration of all the ethical issues involved in following up phased-out projects is vital. In regard to this particular project, the main issues raised in our minds were:

- a) Would the children/foster parents wish to receive a visit from those previously involved in the project?
- b) What would we do if we found that the children were in a very bad condition? What expectations would it arise in them? How would we follow this up?
- c) How would the community perceive the visit?
- d) What value could this "lessons learnt" exercise have for the children?

On the other hand, because of the rather hasty phase-out of the project, we suspected that there was "unfinished business" which we could not ignore, and which the follow-up confirmed.

Prior to the more extensive follow-up in which the author of this report was involved, Tesfaye Diressie and Haile W. Sillassie made a preliminary visit to Woiya village to find the foster families and the children, now young adults, who participated in the project. The reunion turned out to be very warm, even though at that time no promises of assistance had been given. This team returned to Addis Abeba with assurances that a visit to learn from the children's experiences would be welcome.

During the follow-up assessment, and also in visits after that, the team received positive feedback from the former foster children that it was a significant boost to their moral to feel that "they had not been forgotten - and that the whole village was able to see this". The team did not know exactly how the community at large perceived the visit and actions following from that, and we were unable to meet the village leaders as they were engaged in meetings while we were in the area. However, the district authorities were very supportive and expressed amazement that a "foreign NGO" would follow up in this way. At present, we are not aware of negative consequences, which we must be on the look-out for.

Save the Children Norway-Ethiopia, following the feed-back from the team, decided to commit the necessary funds to secure the assets of the former foster children, ensure that immediate health and protection needs were dealt with, as well as funding the necessary follow-up visits. Although the possibility of extra funding being needed had been brought up in the planning phase of this follow-up, it was very heartening to have the endorsement of the present staff of SCN-Ethiopia.

The importance of having enough *time* to sit down in the homes and renew our relationships with the former foster children was crucial. Time to allow for a gradual unfolding of the story of their lives, dwelling on and giving empathetic response to the painful events, sharing their satisfaction of that which was good, trying to grasp what would now be needed from our side that would not create dependency, but would contribute to a more predictable framework for their lives.

Finally, the importance of clarifying to the former foster children of what SCN-Ethiopia felt they were able to do and what they could not do.

9. Conclusions

This small follow-up study demonstrated that children growing up in community-based homes are able, provided their foster parent (s) are respected members of the community, to develop vital networks of support and competence necessary to equip them to face adversity to a certain degree. They are able to develop their roles in the community through participation in work and social events which have a reciprocal nature, continually reinforcing their sense of belonging. Basic education may allow them to access specific roles and status in community organisations. Later marriage with persons who belong to the community further reinforces their integration and acceptance.

Although obviously one cannot generalise from this small material, there is enough evidence from other studies that the special risks run by girls concerning reproductive health and the possibility of sexual abuse needs to be anticipated and taken into account in long-term planning. In the concrete case, the project did not anticipate that the foster mother of the one remaining girl would leave the home.

It may be assumed that the former foster children who had survived into young adulthood, felt more rooted in community life than if they had grown up in a large institution and been discharged from that at 18 years, with no networks or competence in surviving harsh realities.

However, as this, and other case studies illustrate⁴, children who are fostered by non-relatives, and who are also not siblings, and in particular when growing up in communities/ethnic groups which they do not originally belong to, ***need special protection measures to ensure their rights***. This is particularly true in crisis-threatened areas with unstable political environments.

As clearly seen, the protection issues change over time as children grow, and tend to be particularly challenging in adolescence and in the transition to young adulthood, when the time comes to establish one's own family. Many events and decisions taken by children

⁴ Whose Children? David Tolfree 2003

are unpredictable and can have fatal consequences, as illustrated in this report when one of the previous foster children voluntary joined the army, another dies of rabies, and a third was raped and became pregnant.

Although representing a small number of children and homes, it is believed that the findings of this follow-up study can be generalised to make the following main recommendation:

If fostering of children who have lost their families is to represent a real, viable alternative to long-term institutional care, and truly reap the child development benefits of growing up in a family/community environment, **trustworthy projects/authorities/community groups need to have a long-term engagement with the homes which extends into young adulthood.** This does not by any means entail that projects etc. need to have the same level of engagement throughout; on the contrary, gradual phasing out of the *level* of engagement in parallel with increased sustainability of the homes and community responsibility is desirable. One envisages several distinct but overlapping phases:

a) The establishment with community participation of homes in the village (these may have to be constructed); selection of foster mothers/parents; matching children with foster parent and each other (ethnicity, religion, age, sex) through participatory processes with them. Decisions have to be taken regarding family size and gender composition. Keeping siblings together is a must, but there may be added protection risks in keeping non-related boys and girls together - on the other hand, this would represent a more natural family composition. Clarifying in the community the objectives of the follow-up project, and the expected roles of the community are also essential tasks at this stage..

b) Establishing a responsible/advisory group in the community which must include people, who through their mandate/duty/interest to protect children (e.g. the local child protection services if they exist, local teachers, health workers, members of women's organisations, religious and other community leaders), are willing and able to take upon themselves a long-term role in ensuring the well-being of fostered children in the community. This will mean taking upon themselves extra (often unpaid) work, it will involve regular visits, and may also involve having access to material assistance in critical times.

c) Deciding on the different roles of and inputs from all stakeholders. Negotiating place for children in school, discussions with teachers on the special needs of children who have lost parents, and perhaps do not belong to the community. Ensuring health needs are attended to. Training in child development/rights and challenges associated with fostering for foster parents. Establishing written contracts with foster parents.

d) The "building of sustainability" phase – in terms of household security, which entails assistance towards food security (land, labour, ploughing animals, farming implements); but also encouraging the building of networks and relationships in the community – and among the children themselves, which are and will be vital for the quality of the growing-up experience of the children and the viability of this child development project. In this process NGOs have to continually ask themselves: do our actions promote acceptance and integration or estrangement and non-engagement?

Monitoring progress through the use of appropriate tools as described above is essential to guide this process. This is also the time to secure all assets, such as land, property,

animals for the future welfare of the children, through written agreements deposited with the appropriate authorities, and overseen by local lawyers.

e) As the children grow into adolescence, the time comes to “*re-design*” the project with their active input, with their future in mind, where they can be encouraged to take a more leading role in taking responsibility for their own lives. The role of the NGO and its relationship to the foster homes should now be re-defined as a “guardian”- part of the protection system working for and with them. The protection system established at the beginning of the project needs to be reinforced and invigorated. The monitoring system should keep up with new developments and objectives.

f) Projects supporting children who have lost their homes and families will have, as the project described above, invested considerable resources in terms of money and human resources for at least some few years in building a new life for the children. Phasing - out on a pre-conceived concept of how long projects should last without consideration of the child development/child rights issues involved can easily render the initial investments meaningless, especially when this happens in the context of a weak follow-up system.

Therefore continued protective involvement should be seriously considered until the foster children are young adults (23-25 years). If this had been the case in the above project, even after the project had phased out of the area, a model of **protective follow-up** with regular visits from Addis Abeba, and the gradual involvement of the new local authorities as the political crisis calmed down, as well as continued attention to ensuring that legal documents securing their assets were in order, could perhaps have averted some of the tragic events that followed phase out.

Finally, taking into account all the ethical considerations mentioned above, this small follow-up study ten years after gave us learning and insights which are of a much richer quality than what can usually be gained through the usual project evaluations after two-three years. We see more clearly how seeds sown by the project have grown or withered, and why. We come to understand more about how people cope with their lives under very marginal circumstances. Persons involved as children in projects, now grown into young adults, are able to reflect on their past lives and articulate their thoughts and feelings on what happened to them and the impact of the project on their lives. It is also humbling to recognise the limitations of projects in protecting children from life’s many adversities in communities struggling for survival.

2: FAMILY SELF-SUSTENANCE

a. Level of education, training, skills, former experience:

Adults in family:

Children in family:

b. Food production:

Land area- size, quality

Land ownership/rent/borrow

Participation in *kota* system

Total amount of food production/total amount needed until next harvest

Labour requirements

Variety of crops grown

c. Possession of livestock

Types, economic resource? Livestock losses?

d. Income-generating activities:

Who in family is involved in income-generating activities?

Rough estimates of income/month/year

Rough estimates of cash needed/month/year

Utilization of cash

Expandable activities? What assets would be needed?

Economic/other support systems?

e. Assets (house, possessions, utensils, farming implements, clothes etc.)

3: PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS

a. Attachment between non-biological children and caregivers:

(Affectionate interaction, interest and pleasure in child, child expresses wish to stay in the home, child accepts parental role, child seeks out the attention of adult caregivers for comfort and advice).

b. Signs of adequate care being given to the children

(Differentiate between biological/non biological children)

- e) Child's nutritional state, also describe how meals are eaten in family. Types and amounts of food.
- f) Child's health is being looked after – attempts made to get treatment when he/she is ill (traditional or health service).
- g) Child's schooling is being maintained. Interest is shown in Child's progress.

c. Presence of child abuse in any form

(Physical abuse, discrimination, threats of abandonment, sexual abuse, or any form of exploitation of child's dependency. Should be one of the issues talked about in a separate interview with child, but care must be taken not to put the child into a compromising situation).

d. Presence of severe family conflict or other factors which would threaten placement

(For example, severe conflict between adult partners, severe conflicts between placed child and other children in family, or between child and non-related caretaker, i.e. stepfather; also severe health problems in foster parents/re-marriage)

e. Presence of severe emotional/behaviour problems in placed child which threaten the sustainability of child's inclusion in family

Describe and if possible identify cause of such problems. How are these being responded to in the family? What assistance have they sought?

f. Relationship of fostered/placed child to school/teachers/school mates

g. Psychological condition of caregiver(s)

(Depression, passivity, re-orientation towards future),
Emotional state affecting relationship with children/care of children/breastfeeding.
Emotional/material support from others?

4: FAMILY HEALTH/TREATMENT

Adults: (describe conditions and eventual treatment sought (also traditional), results of treatment)

Children: same.

Vaccination status:

5: INTEGRATION INTO COMMUNITY

Describe the relationship of the family as a whole and the fostered/placed children in particular with other members of the community. Have the children been accepted on an equal basis with other children? Have they established friends? Are they involved in community social events, work in the community?

Interaction with other family members/friends:

6: LEGAL ASPECTS AFFECTING THE FAMILY'S PRESENT AND FUTURE

- h) Written agreements on fostering
- i) Agreements on issues such as land and property tenure
- j) Protection agreements with local authorities
- k) Others

7: CO-OPERATION OF FAMILY WITH COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUNCTIONS BY THE PROJECT

(The opinions of adults *and* children should be sought).

- l) What is their understanding of the aims of the such support?
(Understanding of dependency versus self-reliance, duration and tupes of inputs etc.)
- m) What efforts/inputs are they prepared to offer to achieve sustainability?
- n) Do they feel that the assistance given has been relevant, adequate and timely?
- o) What has been particularly helpful?
- p) What perspectives do they have for the future, including the future of the children?
- q) Other comments:

8: COOPERATION WITH COMMUNITY/OTHERS

9: SUMMARY OF MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND ASSESSMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY

Resources in the family in terms of both material and psychosocial factors:

Deficits/areas needing to be improved:

10: PLAN OF ACTION

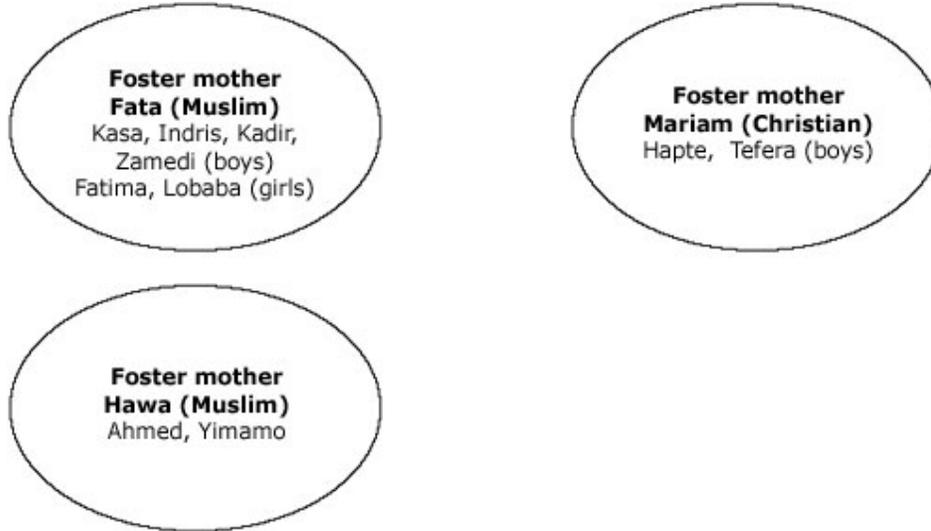
- a) Summary of materials/counselling/inputs/activities so far, including results achieved.
- b) Further steps to be taken in the next half-year

- r) Immediate steps results envisaged
- s) Long term plans
- t) Other activities planned – results envisaged
- u) Next assessment planned:

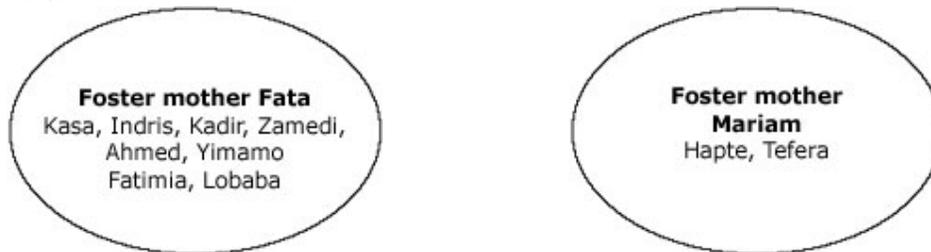
Appendix 2

Map of community-based foster homes and changes that took place

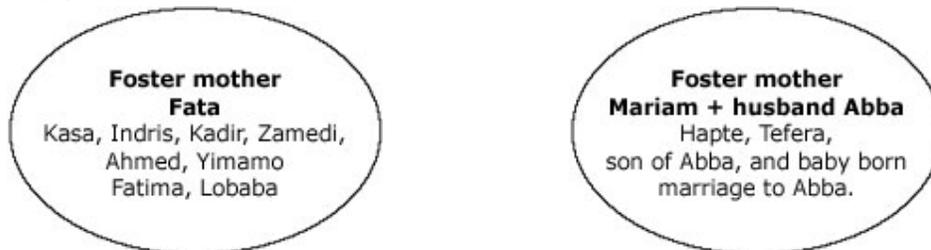
End of 1988



1989



1990



Between **1990 -1992**, Kadir, Indris and Zamedi from Fata's family were given by her in adoption to 3 farmers in the village. Two of these (Kadir and Indris) were successful in that the staff confirmed the children were happy in their new situation. Zamedi was however exploited by his adoptive father after the project phased out. Kadir died at the war front, and Indris died after contracting rabies.

Tefera and Lobaba were eventually found by their mothers and left the foster homes to live with them. Yimam was adopted, and his mother eventually found him, however he continues to stay with his foster family.

1994

**Foster mother Fata
leaves the home**
*following her conversion
to Christianity*
Kasa, Ahmed, and Fatima
continued to live
in the home

**Foster mother Mariam
+ husband Abba**
Hapte
Abba's son;
Mariam & Abba's daughter

December 2001 at follow-up

**Foster mother
Fata's original home**
Kasa, (now 25)
his wife Zehara
and baby son Jemal
Fatima (now 18)

**Foster mother Mariam
+ husband Abba**
Hapte, Abba's son
and their daughter.
Plans for Hapte's marriage and
moving to his own
home nearby

Ahmed lives by himself in grounds of foster mother Hawa's original home

Zamedi is living with a new family whom he works for.

Appendix 3

List of Acronyms

RB-E	Redd Barna Ethiopia
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MY	Mekanie Yesus
PA	Peasant's Association
CBFH	Community-based foster home
SCNiE	Save the Children Norway in Ethiopia
MOLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

Appendix 4

Further Reading

Whose children? Separated Children's Protection and Participation in Emergencies. David Tolfree, Save the Children 2004. available from www.rb.se/bookshop

Roofs and Roots: the Care of Separated Children in the Developing World, Aldershot, Arena

Conflict, Poverty and Family Separation: the Problem of Institutional Care. Celia Petty and Elizabeth Jareg in Rethinking the Trauma of War, Save the Children 1998

Family and Community Interventions for children affected by AIDS. Lina Richter, Julie Manegold, Riashnee Pather. Research Monograph 2004, Human Sciences and Research Council.